THE FIRECRACKING HARD ROCK MAGAZINE!

FIREWORKS

Issue 5 • £4.00

September ~ October 2001

VAUGHN TO ROCK!

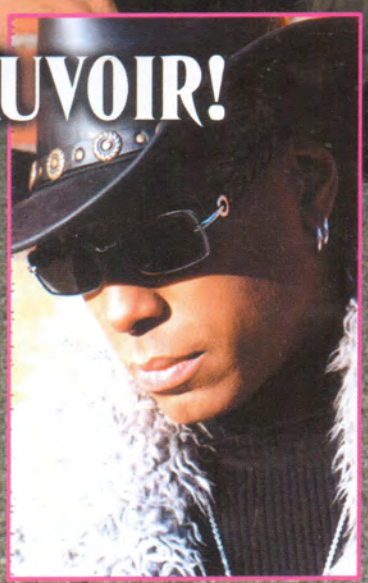
DANNY VAUGHN Talks Fearless

SOUL DOCTOR!

FREE SAMPLER CD!!!

DARE!

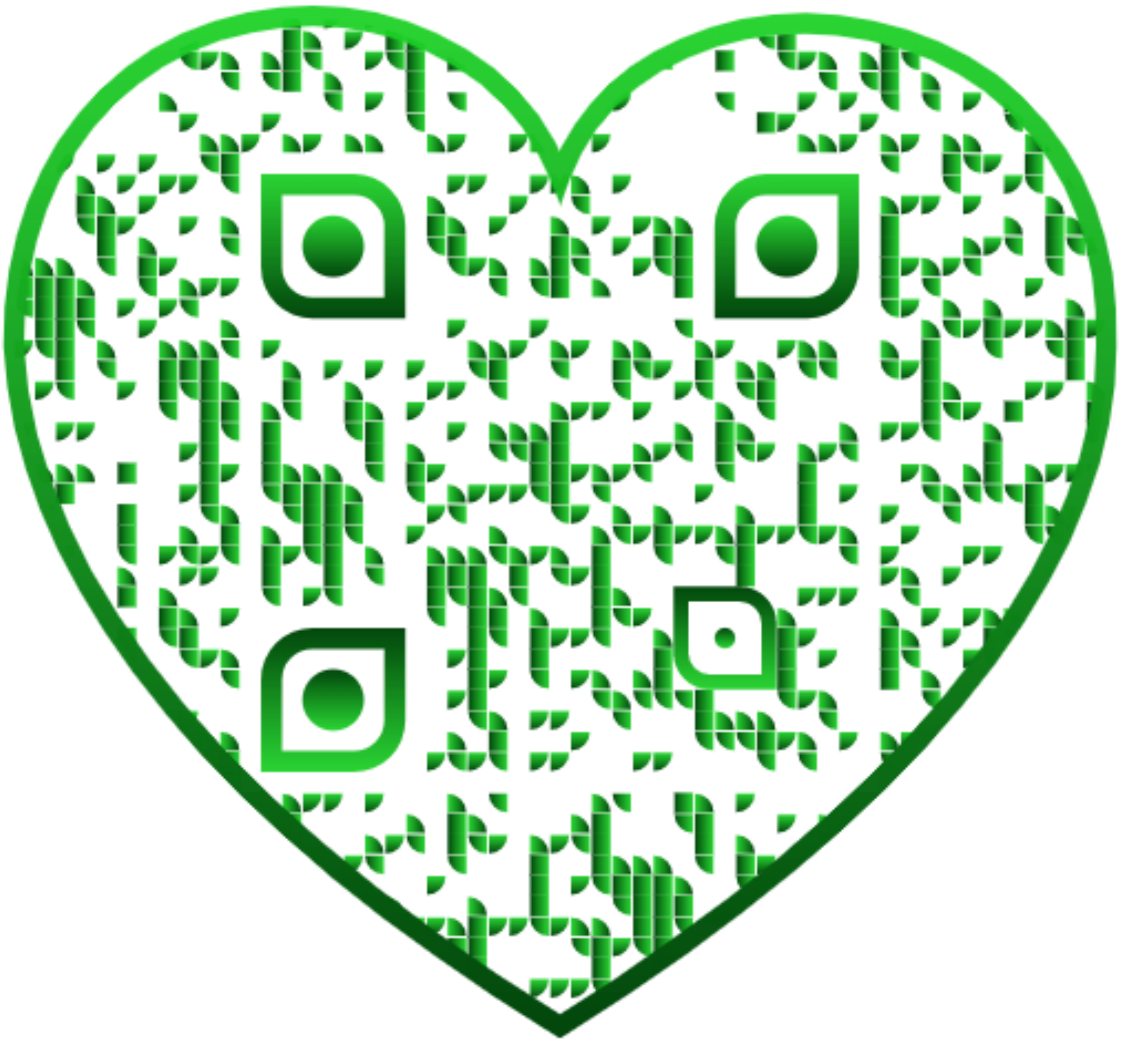
JEAN BEAUVOIR!



Hot New Releases: AEROSMITH • BONFIRE • VON GROOVE
STAN BUSH • STRATOVARIUS and loads more!

Plus: HAREM SCAREM
URIAH HEEP • BRAD GILLIS
TERRY BROCK and much more!!

LEGS DIAMOND ★ DOOGIE WHITE ★ 38 SPECIAL ★ LIZ LARIN

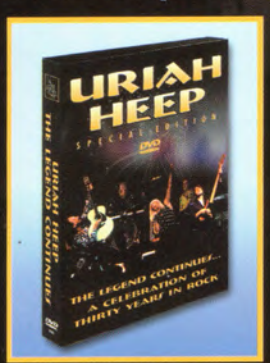


CONGRATULATIONS

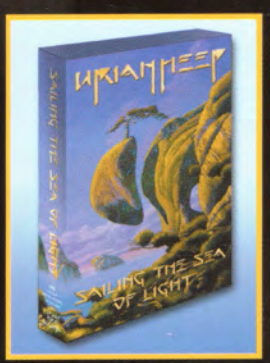
URIAH HEEP

What a way to celebrate a 30th anniversary! A sold out UK tour.... a killer greatest hits live album... two superb DVD releases... a stunning acoustic album, featuring Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull.... and there's more to come. Uriah Heep will be back in the UK this autumn. Visit uriah-heep.com for details. Get these great Uriah Heep records from the Heepstore or visit your local record shop.

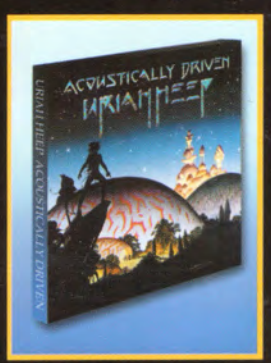
FUTURE ECHOES OF THE PAST CD DOUBLE LIVE ALBUM:
SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION £25
REGULAR EDITION £14
A special numbered limited edition, including a twenty page booklet, signed by the band in a stylish presentation box.



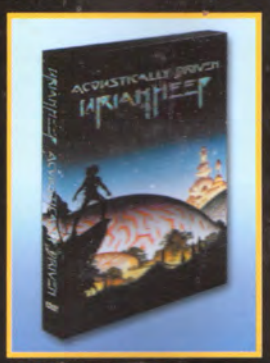
THE LEGEND CONTINUES DVD & VHS:
SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION £25
REGULAR EDITION £15
A special numbered limited edition including a sixteen page booklet signed by the band in a stylish presentation box.



SAILING THE SEA OF LIGHT VHS & DVD £15
Featuring previously unseen footage, brand new performances, back stage interviews and extensive film from the legendary Moscow tour in 1987.



ACOUSTICALLY DRIVEN CD:
SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION £25
REGULAR EDITION £14
A special numbered limited edition including a 20 page booklet signed by the group, in a stylish presentation box.



ACOUSTICALLY DRIVEN VHS & DVD:
SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION £25
REGULAR EDITION £15
A special numbered limited edition including a 20 page booklet signed by the group, in a stylish presentation box.

Please tick requirements:

The Legend Continues Special Edition	☐ DVD £25	☐ VHS £25	☐ CD £25
The Legend Continues Regular Edition	☐ DVD £15	☐ VHS £15	☐ CD £14
Acoustically Driven Special Edition	☐ DVD £25	☐ VHS £25	☐ CD £25
Acoustically Driven Regular Edition	☐ DVD £15	☐ VHS £15	☐ CD £14
Sailing the Sea of Light Documentary	☐ DVD £15	☐ VHS £15	

Please include £2.50 for post and packing.
I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Classic Rock Legends Ltd for £.....
Or please debit my card : Amex ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Switch ☐
Card No. ..... Expiry ..... Issue No .....
Name. .....
Address. .....
.....
..... Postcode .....

Please send to: Classic Rock Legends Ltd, 11 Central chambers, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 6QN.
Please allow 28 days for delivery.
Fireworks 8/01

These unique Special Edition items are not available in stores and can only be ordered from the telephone number below or uriah-heep.com.

To order call 01789 294472, fax 01789 415210 or visit www.uriah-heep.com or visit your local record shop

Distributed by Pinnacle

FIREWORKS

THE FIRECRACKING HARD ROCK MAGAZINE

HEADQUARTERS:
FIREWORKS MAGAZINE
10 DUNNOCK CLOSE, OFFERTON
STOCKPORT, SK2 5XD, U.K.
EMAIL: FireworksMag@aol.com

EDITOR:
BRUCE MEE

CONTRIBUTORS:
DAVE COCKETT
ROB EVANS
PAUL DIAMOND
KIERAN DARGAN
KLAUS BRANDLHUBER
EVA MONTES
WOLF GANT
PHIL ASHCROFT
SUE ASHCROFT
KEITH McDONALD
MARIBEL RUIZ
PETRA ROTTMANN
THE BAILEY BROTHERS
JON HINCHLIFFE
NICKY BALDRIAN
PAUL JEROME SMITH
GARY MARSHALL
KELV HELLRAZER

PHOTOGRAPHY:
JEFF PRICE

DESIGN & EXECUTION:
SEBASTIAN KOZAK
AMERICAN IMAGES INTERNATIONAL

DISTRIBUTION:
CARGO RECORDS

© 2001 FIREWORKS MAGAZINE.
All Rights Reserved.
Unauthorized Duplication Is A Violation Of Applicable Laws.
Fireworks Logotype: © 2000 Sebastian Kozak.

Editorial

Welcome to #5 of Fireworks. Firstly, thanks for a great response to the Silver CD competition ran last issue. Winner is S.Gorman from Basford.

Once again we ran out of space for all our proposed interviews, so these will feature in next issue. Doesn't look like the proposed Ritchie Blackmore interview will happen. We sent his manager a couple of issues of the mag. Ritchie and Candice loved it, but someone in the camp got upset about the comments written within the Axel Rudi Pell review and decided not to go ahead as planned. Personally, I think that's a pretty sad attitude.

The next issue is planned for the Gods in early November. See the advert inside for further details, and I hope to see many of you there. Come up to the merchandise stand and say hello!!

Speaking of the Gods, it is vital that events such as these and Z Rock should have your full support if they are to continue. So grab all your friends and come down for a couple of great weekends!!

Bruce Mee

★ CONTENTS ★ CONTENTS ★ CONTENTS ★ CONTENTS ★

SOUL DOCTOR - 30

DARE - 8

HAREM SCAREM - 12

LIZ LARIN - 28

BRAD GILLIS - 52

BLASTS FROM THE PAST - 56

INTERVIEWS:

JEAN BEAUVOIR 32
TERRY BROCK 24
DARE 8
BRAD GILLIS 52
HAREM SCAREM 12
HAVEN 54
KARNATAKA 26
LEGS DIAMOND 6
LIZ LARIN 28
SOUL DOCTOR 30
38 SPECIAL 23
URIAH HEEP 16
VAUGHN 10
DOOGIE WHITE 14
ALCHEMY VII 57

ALBUM REVIEWS:

ADAGIO 37
AEROSMITH 33
ALCHEMY VII 43
AMSTERDAM 46
ANATOMIC 40
AVIARY 47
BONFIRE 34
TERRY BROCK 48
STAN BUSH 49
CHALICE 34
DANGER DANGER 40
DARE 36
DAVID GLENN EISLEY 44
GRAND ILLUSION 49
HALFORD 38
HOTWIRE 41
HURRICANE 44
HUSH 43
ICE AGE 42
IRON SAVIOUR 40
JADE 35
ERIC JOHNSON 46
KINGDOM COME 41
NIKOLO KOTZEV 35
KYLE 34
LAST TRIBE 42
LE MANS 50
LION'S SHARE 35
MELODICA 36
MONKEY HEAD 48
MOSTLY AUTUMN 33
NARNIA 41
PARADISE 48
PENDRAGON 42
PRISONER 41
RADIO SILENCE 49
RADIOACTIVE 46
REIGN OF TERROR 40
SHADOW GALLERY 37
SHY 39
SNAKES IN PARADISE 37
SOUL DOCTOR 35
SPRUNG MONKEY 42
STARCASTLE 48
STEEVI JAIMZ 42
STRATOVARIUS 43
SURGIN 50
TEMPEST 34
TEMPLAR 47
TNA 39
TYGERS OF PAN TANG 49
URBAN TALE 38
VAUGHN 47
VIC LECAR'S BLUE MOON 44
VINNIE VINCENT INVASION 46
VON GROOVE 37
WAR AND PEACE 38
WISDOM CALL 36

FIRING ON ALL SIX:

NEMEL ROCK FESTIVAL 20
VON GROOVE 22

OTHER STUFF:

BAILEY BROTHERS 4
BLASTS FROM THE PAST 56
COMPETITION 58
PLAYLISTS 58
UNDERGROUND SENSATIONS 55

JEAN BEAUVOIR - 32

LEGS DIAMOND - 6

VAUGHN - 10

TERRY BROCK - 24

AEROSMITH - 33

VON GROOVE - 6

★ CONTENTS ★ CONTENTS ★ CONTENTS ★ CONTENTS ★

BAILEY BROTHERS

www.baileybrothers.co.uk

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK WE SALUTE YOU!

IT'S THE 'END OF AN ERA' for Graham Oliver, Graham Bonnet is still Stargazing, Paul Dianno is 'Singin' In The Rain', Tony Martin is let out of the Cage, and Baileys Comet are confirmed for the Gods. *It's all coming your way with the Bailey Brothers, so pour a pint of slurp and join in the fun!*

Hi you cool dudes and dudette's. Welcome to another action packed edition of Fireworks.

The 'Judgement Day' album by Baileys Comet has been well received in Europe and has just been released in Japan so many thanks to all of you who have bought it. We are not going to dwell on the band stuff because we had an interview in the last issue but just to mention that we are really looking forward to the Gods and can't wait to see some old and new friends there.

ROCK GOSSIP

Paul Dianno has just returned from the Wacken festival in Germany where the likes of Motorhead and Saxon have been churning out the true British Rock and Metal. It pissed it down at times but nothing seems to dampen Dianno's spirits. Did you know that Paul has 3 bands? He is doing so well in South America that he has a band in Brazil, one in Argentina and of course one in the UK. It's hard enough to get dedicated musicians in the UK so God knows how he has managed to have 3 bands and keep them happy? You can see the reason behind it, at the end of the day there's only Paul who needs to fly out there. One bag and that's your lot! Cool idea mate. Not the largest turn out ever at Wacken but playing to 30 to 40,000 is a good buzz these days for sure.

Graham Bonnet returned to the UK and it was the hottest ticket in town at the Hard Rock in Wolverhampton. His choice of covering some Beatles songs may have surprised many but apparently he always warmed up with a few of the fab four classics and decided to treat the UK to his version. Thankfully though he still has that incredible vocal range although he did cancel a show when his voice went out for lunch and didn't return. The highlight had to be 'Stargazer', possibly one of Rainbow's finest songs? Anyway taking a break from working on the Cage new album was ex-Black Sabbath vocalist Tony Martin who thought he could slide in un noticed with his new look. Yeah the famous cowboy hat is a thing of the past and the hair has been shaved off but if you don't want to be noticed then don't compete with Graham during Stargazer. Tony couldn't resist the opportunity to sing along and test himself. "I was going for it full on, I made most of the notes and I couldn't hear myself that well over the PA but yeah, the old guy still got it. I just wanted to see if I could still reach those bloody notes."

GRAHAM OLIVER - 'END OF AN ERA' - EXCLUSIVE!

Graham Oliver, Steve Dawson, Biff Byford, Peter Gill and Paul Quin, that's the original Saxon that rose from the depths of a mining community to world wide stardom. The Wheels Of Steel album and single propelled them into the big time. Their trade mark eagle would light up the stage and Biff Byford's Yorkshire banter would be the ideal link in between classic British heavy rock anthems.

These days it's a sad affair, the constant battle for the right of the name Saxon may have dimmed the lights on the eagle for good? Hopefully we will get Biff's response to this interview in the near future but before we talk Saxon with founder member Graham Oliver let's talk about his brand new solo project, 'End Of An Era'...

You have a new album out End Of An Era can you tell us why you have decided to put out a solo project at this stage of your career?

"Whilst writing riffs at a studio in Mexborough I mentioned to Angel Air (record label) that I was jamming some Hendrix songs and they said if I could do a full CD by June that they would put it out as a solo album. So I did, but with only two Jimi songs. The rest is of my own stuff, some Saxon and a collaboration with my son's band Bullrush as I wanted a contemporary feel."

Can you talk us through the tracks and the meaning behind them?

"First up is 'Born to rock and Roll'. It is an original song idea I had for 'Solid Ball Of Rock' in 1990 done how it was intended when I wrote the riff. 'Wamita' is Indian for thunder it's a short instrumental, 'Can You See Me?' is off 'Are You Experienced?', a straight rocker in f sharp. The next song 'Standing In The Rain' is a more contemporary rock song with my son's band doing the session. 'Golden Shred Jam' is an instrumental with me and Sheffield guitarist Richard Spencer, Richard playing the very modern style and me playing a more old school type a kind of old meets new. The title track 'End Of An Era' is a slow ballad type of anthem with a melodic solo and lyrics everyone can relate to I'm sure."

Why did you choose that track as the title track?

"Well I think it is the end of an era for the rock guitar hero. You don't see any new bands with a new guitar wizard like Yngwie Malmsteen. When I stood at the side of the stage and saw him play live it was fantastic and you just don't hear this type of player in the new bands."

Okay, back to the album tracks, what's up next?

"'Ode To A Wild Blue Angel' is an instrumental that is for all the great guitarists like Stevi Ray and Randy Rhodes etc. 'Annabell' is a simple rocker, some say it reminds them of early Who. The drum track is exceptional on this song. 'Love or Confusion' is a Jimi song that we have rocked up and is not very often covered. 'Goodbye to Yesterday' is with Bullrush, a great live song. 'Never Surrender' is a remake of the original. I just thought it would be fun to recreate with Dobby etc. 'Sippin' Wine' is Jimi's lyrics with my music. Jimi wrote this and put (slow blues) at the top of the page, so I did it in "f"- Hendrix style."

You have always been a big fan of Jimi Hendrix. Do you like to use the Fender Strat and was he your inspiration as a young musician?

"I only have used a Strat very occasionally on the destructive bits in the past, my main squeeze is a 68 Gibson SG and a Fernandes with a Floyd Trem. Jimi, along with Blackmore, Page, Iommi etc was my main influence - the heavier the better."

I can remember you telling us some years ago that you saw Hendrix live. Can you talk us through the experience and was it as electric as those early TV clips suggest?

"I bunked off school to see Jimi at Sheffield City Hall in Nov '67. The experience for a 13 year old guitarist was quite numbing and I never really recovered. Nobody had ever seen or heard anything like it."

How did it feel recording his material, as a fan did you feel under more pressure?

"I feel music is written to be played and doing those songs was great fun. I think our versions rock."

Can you remember where you were the day he died and what feelings went through your mind at that time?

"Steve Dawson came by to pick me up to play the Queens Hotel in Maltby and said, "Hendrix is dead". We were gutted and attempted to play 'Hey Joe'. This was our first pub gig at this time."

When did you decide to change your name to Saxon from Son Of A Bitch and how did you manage to drag your arses out of Barnsley to such a level that you were on the brink of a record deal?

"We got a record deal first but USA insisted that we change the name of the band for obvious reasons, Live, we just stormed it every night and you just cannot keep a good band down. Eventually things started to happen but it took a while, it wasn't just overnight."

Talk us through the time just prior to signing your first recording contract. Who was in the band and who was writing the songs?

"Every one chipped in writing. It was a band effort, that's why it worked. We used songs from the SoB days like 'Freeway Mad', 'Wheels of Steel' etc. The first album titled 'SAXON' was mainly the live club set. The original line up was Gill, Byford, Dawson, Oliver and Quinn."

How did it feel to have such a popular album and single?

"'Wheels of Steel' went into the charts at number 5 and we had just come off the Motorhead tour on £30 a week. So when we heard it on the radio sat in the car in the London traffic jams we couldn't believe it. Everyone just thought 'Yes!!' "

So the wheels are in motion and Saxon is a major act in a very short time what was the camaraderie like between the band at that point?

"The highlight of that period was playing Doncaster to a sold out home crowd at the Top Rank with the legendary Bailey Brothers hosting the show [his words not ours)]. To top it off we played to a sold out Sheffield City Hall. The camaraderie of the band was excellent at this time. We were just enjoying everything that we had strived for and dreamed of. Everything was finally happening like Top of the Pops, playing with Rainbow and going to America. All the hard slog in clapped out transit vans, for absolutely no money all of a sudden seemed very distant."

Tell us about those good times and some of the bands you toured with?

"The list is endless I could write a full book just based on touring with the band. We played in Europe with Judas Priest, Gillan, and in America with Rush, Black Sabbath, AC/DC Blue Oyster Cult and so on. We also headlined our own shows. When we played the Whiskey a Go Go our support groups were Ratt and Metallica. This was Metallica's second gig. Then we did 'Special Guests' on the Motley Crue tour. To get an idea of that read their new book. One of the funny stories was when we had been in America for three months and we were walking around the Indian Reservation in Oklahoma. We were on Rainbow's 'Straight Between The Eyes' tour and Steve Dawson remarked to me "I could just murder an Indian" and we got some really funny looks but the Americans present saw the funny side after we explained.

Then we toured with UFO (them boys can drink!) Ozzy with Randy Rhodes. In effect it was 5 years of non-stop partying and touring in America."

One thing noticeable when speaking to you is your incredible memory of such events. Is this because you just love and cherish those days in Saxon?

"You always remember the good times, the bad times like travelling etc you tend to forget about. We have got fond memories and we do remember. Don't forget I was doing it with Saxon till 1995 and continue on with the original guys this present day."

Talk us though your personal favourite Saxon albums and a couple of the songs you have played on where you are pleased with your own performance?

"This is so difficult I haven't got a personal favourite as there are highlights from certain songs that I love. There are

some that I hate because I know how good they could have been if we hadn't been put with the 'wrong' producers like Stefan Galfas and Kevin Beamish who had no idea where a Yorkshire band were coming from or wanted to go. One of my favourite solos apart from the obvious ones like 'Dallas 1pm' is the solo in 'Alter Of The Gods' from 'Solid Ball of Rock' - it is particularly fast for my style and even Paul Quinn said it was the solo of the album."

Okay, the obvious question is when did it all start to get a bit shaky in Saxon?

"When one person started doing all the finances with another person in Germany and wanting to pay the band members a wage instead of fair and share like before. This is when it became a job and stopped being a band. After this point I asked for openness and accountability and discovered this request didn't go down well with the certain parties wanting to run things."

Saxon carried on without Pete Gill and Steve Dawson, but at the time they were sacked you were still a dominant part in the band. Couldn't you have stood up to Biff and said that these guys should be in the band?

"You could ask Steve Dawson that question but it's easy to be rail roaded by the people that are paying out the money. Line up changes are the kiss of death and that's when Saxon started to really decline but the answer to your question is yes. We should have stood up but there are certain things with publishing and other things that were instrumental in the strangle hold and complicated band finances that compromised our position. I cannot really say anymore as it's still with the courts and it would be wrong to do so."

I saw an interview on the web the other day where Biff said that he had sacked you all. What reason did Biff give for sacking so many members?

"It's very difficult to talk about. I got a letter through the post to say I was out of the band. Not even a phone call and no one would answer the phone to me. No-one should forget that the name Saxon is owned by Steve Dawson and myself and that we auditioned Biff to be our singer. It is a very emotive subject, when you discover things happening that you would have thought would only come from unscrupulous managers. If someone gloats over things like that it's pretty sad."

There were suggestions that you begged him to re-instate you in the band and the obvious question is would you go back if asked again?

"THERE IS ONE REAL SAXON and that is one that has Gill, Dawson, Oliver, Quinn and Byford. Many bands are reforming the original line-ups like Black Sabbath, Kiss etc so who knows what could happen in the future."

Saxon with Biff have worked hard over the last few years and are having a successful run in Europe especially Germany where bands like Judas Priest and Iron Maiden are still huge. Although you will be bitter for the sacking surely Biff has only done what David Coverdale did with Whitesnake when he ditched Bernie Marsden and Micky Moody and the likes. Just brought in fresh faces to add a new spark to the old fire?

"Don't forget I was with 'his' version of the band up until 'Dogs of War' in 1995. Whilst the band appears to be successful in Germany it was only because what we did in the 80's carries through to today. It's pretty much equal in the rest of the world between his version of Saxon and my version. There's so much back catalogue that is available in other countries, in fact there are another three albums due for release containing all original members. The perception is as if the band is still putting out albums but in Germany is it different because they have a contract there and at this point we are still in negotiations."

Has this whole affair left you bitter and disillusioned?

"The whole affair has made me even more determined than ever to kick ass! I lost a finger when I was 24. That didn't stop me and neither will this."

And at this point it's enough to bring tears to a glass eye. Now seemed a good idea to move on to the Oliver/Dawson period.

You decided to get together and form Oliver/Dawsons Saxon after a brief spell as Son Of A Bitch. Was this just an attempt to try and fight back at Biff, I mean the long legal battles over the name keep resurfacing?

"Steve and I got together really quickly with Pete Gill and it was going to be a continuation of Saxon but because we got tied in with an American singer Ted Bullet the project of doing an album and calling it Son of A Bitch happened in the meantime. Saxon could not have an American singer or a German drummer. It was always our intention to play under the name that me and Steve formed and it's our right to play our music. They are our songs and we will bloody well play 'em. Last week we played to 2,000 people and went down an absolute storm-no Biff involvement."

Were did you play?

"Croatia. It was a festival lasting ten days. They had all sorts of bands on but we were the only named rock band on the bill."

Where do you see your future in solo projects like the End Of An Era album or will you still keep pushing the Saxon connection?

"End Of An Era was just the right timing and I have no plans to do anything else except focus on the upcoming Saxon project."

Have you started on it yet?

"Yes, we are demoing it at the moment and we have labels and publishers who want to hear the new stuff. The Drums and bass are down and Hayden has done his guitars. I still have mine to do and then we will get the vocals down etc."

Any album title on the way yet?

"We have a working title of 'Hell Is Not for Angels' that's based on a book about Hells Angels."

Any final messages to your fans that have stood by you throughout your career?

"Thanks for your support. Hopefully we will see you at a gig near you- come and check us out."

So with a floor full of tape we leave Graham and Biff to battle it out for the rights to the name Saxon. Personally speaking, it's a shame to see a band that once stood proud as a Yorkshire unit so dismantled and fragmented. Unfortunately, for legal reasons we can't disclose a lot of what else was said in this interview.

See you at the Gods and make some noise for Baileys Comet!!

BAILEY BROTHERS

AILEY BROTHERS ★ BAILEY BROTHERS ★ BAI

FIREWORKS

FIRIN' ON ALL SIX!

SAMPLER CD • VOLUME 4

1. **JORN - 'Sunset Station'**
From the album 'World Changer' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

2. **STAN BUSH - 'What I've Got Is Real'**
From the album 'Language of The Heart' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

3. **DARE - 'Silent Thunder'**
From the album 'Belief' (LEGEND RECORDS)

4. **DEMON - 'Never Saw It Coming'**
From the album 'Spooked Out Monkey' (RECORD HEAVEN MUSIC)

5. **HUSH - 'Don't Turn Around'**
From the album 'Hush II' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

6. **KARNATAKA - 'Heaven Can Wait'**
From the album 'The Storm' (IMMRAMA RECORDS)

7. **5.15 - 'Stone Cold Heartbreak'**
From the album 'Death Of A Clown`' (RECORD HEAVEN MUSIC)

8. **ALCHEMY VII - 'The Magick'**
From the album 'Alchemy VII' (SISYPHUS RECORDS)

9. **HAVEN - 'Show Them'**
From the album 'The Road' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

10. **URIAH HEEP - 'Lady In Black'** (ACOUSTIC)
From the album 'Acoustically Driven' (CLASSIC ROCK LEGENDS)

11. **MELODICA - 'Love Metal'**
From the album 'Love Metal' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

12. **URBAN TALE - 'Doris Day'**
From the album 'Urban Tale' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

13. **TRIBUTE TO JASON BECKER - 'Tell The Truth'**
From the album 'Warmth In The Wilderness' (LION MUSIC)

14. **LAST TRIBE - 'Ready For The Storm'**
From the album 'The Ritual' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

15. **TERRY BROCK - 'Back To Eden'**
From the album 'Back To Eden' (NOW & THEN/FRONTIERS)

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER or at least twenty five years as is the case with legendary U.S rockers Legs Diamond. Having been out of the limelight for many a year they seem to be making a comeback of sorts, they've just played their first gig in five years and their first three albums have been remastered and issued on CD for the first time. With so much activity going on, Fireworks thought it was time to catch up with the band.

Its been 25 years since you first formed.whats kept you doing this on and off for so long.

MIKE PRINCE: There is nothing more awesome than writing, creating, recording and then not only seeing and hearing the fruits of your labors but being then able to play them for a live audience. That is the ultimate high!! A band is like a second family. It's sum is greater than the whole of it's parts. I'm sure that had we had a strong and steady record label we would have always been recording and touring.

ROGER ROMEO: I personally haven't stopped playing since I first picked up a guitar in 1965. I haven't spent more than a month at any time without being in a band. Legs as been a wonderful experience in my long musical career and I will continue with it till I die!

JEFF POOLE: The love of music. I cant think of a time when I would not want to play music. To stick with something for a long time you really have to love it. Roger and I joke about being in a band together when were 80 years old and playing a club somewhere. Who knows maybe we will be one day.

Your first two albums have just been re issued in the u.k for the first time on cd.what do these albums mean to you personnely.

MIKE PRINCE: Our 3rd album just came out on CD as well and for me it is the fulfillment of a promise to our fans whose vinyl and cassettes were worn out. It renews and makes permanent the music we created in our first 5 years. Also these albums had been bootlegged many times and the quality of those boots was embarrassing and we wanted toonce and for all get the real deal to our fans.

ROGER ROMEO: It's a great chance for the fans to hear them again with the quality the new technogy can lend to old recordings, and for us it's a chance to be proud of our legacy.

JEFF POOLE: For me they represent great times, and great music. At the time those albums were out, we were having such a great time touring constantly. Playing with some of the best bands in the world at that time. To listen to them now, It brings back such great memories, also gives a new audience who wasn't going to concerts back then a chance to hear how it all started.

You've also just released the long lost album 'Uncut Diamond', why wait so long to release it?

MIKE PRINCE: These were songs that were just demos and nothing more. We always liked the production value of the tape (just 2 track) and a year or so ago I talked with the guys in the band and contacted Zoom and we all agreed that this was something the fans would love. These were much better than the quality of any of the bootleg songs that were floating around and the fans deserved the best we had.

ROGER ROMEO: It was originally a "live" demo meant to be our 4th LP but "complications" happened and it never did.

JEFF POOLE: We used to record live demos of any songs that were half way worked up. We would listen back, thenchoose which ones we wanted to actually record. Then wewould dissect them, put them back together, andrecord them for real. Soon after we recorded the demothat was to become uncut diamond Roger left theband to pursue his outside interests. With him gone we just shelved the tapes and moved on. One day many years later I ran into Mike Prince at a music convention. We started talking and he was asking if I remembered that recording session we did with Roger. I said sure, in fact I got a copy do you want to hear it. Well, one thing leads to another, and after a masterful job by Mike in the studio (he really is amazing), 'Uncut Diamond' was born.

When can we expect another studio album,are you working on one at present?

MIKE PRINCE: We have begun writing new songs but have no release date as of now other that to say it will be done when it's done and when we're proud of it.

ROGER ROMEO: We are working on a brand new CD with some of the old LD style and some new suprises! I already have 4 new songs and will be working with Mike P and Rick on others.

JEFF POOLE: We should be recording it soon. I know everyone is still writing material. Mike set the stage for this one. #1 there should be no barriers, no restrictions. And #2 they should all be songs that we would like to play live. This album should be something everyone in the audience would like hearing. I've heard some of Rogers stuff, and its
really quite heavy.

Do you still play live.If so what type of venues and how are you received.

MIKE PRINCE: We just played live this past April for the first time in 5 years and the crowd response was better that ever. We had more fun than we could remember and vow to do it again more often. We would like to be the opening act on the 2001 Van Halen Tour.

ROGER ROMEO: They played live in San Antonio in April but unfortunaltely I couldn't make the gig. Next time for sure. We may be playing in the LA area in the near future.

JEFF POOLE: LD has not played much in the past 5 years. We got back together for a reunion so to speak in San Antonio, April of this year. The response was overwhelming. So much so, we decided to give it another go, even if it has to be a limited one. In all of the shows I've done with this band, clubs or stadiums, the audience has been great. An audience knows the difference between a band just going through the motions, and one that rocks its ass off.

Before your debut was released you toured with KISS. Do you have any fond memories of that time.

MIKE PRINCE: Yes...we were like kids in a candy store...we had opened some show for Te Nugent...but this was much bigger and full-blown The guys in Kiss were not only great hosts but the actually increased our set time from 30 minutes t 45 minutes because they liked what they hear and the response from the audience.

ROGER ROMEO: They were some of the bes gigs we ever played. Imagine opening for 22,00 people on your first gig! KISS were the nices people we ever opened for.

JEFF POOLE: We had become friends wit Gene Simmons, the whole band actually, but it wa Gene who really befriended the band. He woul come to our rehearsal, hang with us in the club he was really great. I was personally impressed wit gene because here is this superstar who was s focussed. You never saw him messed up. Yo could tell he really cared about the business. Wel we get this call to tour with KISS, if we can be i Kentucky in something ridicules like two day Needless to say we burned rubber all the way ou of town. So we drive nonstop to arrive just in tim to play. We unload the truck, and move the equip ment to the stage, only for some stage hand to te us, sorry you'll have to wait until after our breal only union stage hands can lift the equipment t

An Interview by Rob 'Emperor Ming' Evans

the stage. What kind of shit is this. Keep in mind we just drove nonstop for two days. Now they let the crowd in, by the time they lift our gear to the stage the crowd is half full. At this point were just hoping everything still works. Anyway, I go down to the dressing room, and I'm walking through the tunnel of the Rupp arena, and here comes Gene walking towards me. He looks at me and says, I always knew you would make it. Its times like that, that make you forget that two day drive.

What's the current line up of Legs Diamond?

ROGER ROMEO: All the original LEGS D members except for Michael Diamond, who is going through some painful hand surgery for the next year. Mike Prince, Rick Sanford, Jeff Poole, Me (Roger Romeo) and Adam Cury on bass.

JEFF POOLE: As it goes right now its the original line up, with the exception of Adam Kury replacing Michael Diamond, who for his own reasons has declined returning. After having just played with Adam in San Antonio, I can tell you he is great player, and a super person to be around. A true professional.

Did you enjoy your tour of the U.K in the early 90s and was it an eye opener having to play such small venues like the gig I attended,Stairways in Birkenhead.

MIKE PRINCE: Just being in the UK was a dream come true, never mind the size of the venues. I wish we could have continued on to the continent but maybe next time!!!

Was there any point in your career with Legs D that you thought 'I wish I hadn't done that'.

MIKE PRINCE: No...No...No. You get out of something what you put into it and we put our collective all into Legs Diamond and got much more out!!!

ROGER ROMEO: We should have finished the 4th LP, "Uncut", with Cream Records.

JEFF POOLE: You could say that in anything you do. Unfortunately, that's life. You make a certain amount of mistakes and hope you learn from them. To answer that question specifically, there are just too many toes to step on.

Who's been the biggest influence on your career and why.

MIKE PRINCE There is no one person and no one band. I chose this career because it's what I have always loved and wanted to do.

ROGER ROMEO: Too many to mention but my fav all time guitar players are Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton.

JEFF POOLE: Ian Paice. Besides being one of the best drummers of all time, he is truly a great person. I was fortunate to sit down with him many times, and just talk drumming. He came to our rehearsal, and allowed me to go to his. The fact that someone of that caliber would take the time to listen to my views, is to me, an example of pure class. His abilities are a constant inspiration

There seems to be a revival of 70s American hard rock bands with both ANGEL and STARZ reforming. Do you think there's still a demand for this style of music?

MIKE PRINCE Absolutely! The demand which was gone for a time is now back and very strong. Just listen to the new crop of heavy bands and ignore the vocals and walla, you have the 70s and 80s style of hard rock music.

ROGER ROMEO: I think there will always be a place for any era's favorite music.

JEFF POOLE: Man I hope so. I mean, wouldn't it be great to have a new outlet for what we've been doing all these years.

Do you have any particular favourites out of all the songs you've recorded.

MIKE PRINCE: No, they are all like children we've had and we love them all but in different ways.

ROGER ROMEO: For me it would have to be the track 'Woman'.

JEFF POOLE: 'Waiting' was always fun for me. It's very subtle, but I always liked the feeling of that song. 'Woman' is always great to play. The way the audience seems to react is always special. Stage Fright was always fun live.

With over 25 years of experience of life on the road, any favourite stories.

MIKE PRINCE: Most of the years on the road blend into an ear to ear smile that just won't go away. There were many ups and a few downs and it would wear out my little fingers to go into any greater detail.

ROGER ROMEO: The first night opening for KISS! I also liked doing the touring with Ted Nugent. They were also very nice to us.

JEFF POOLE: I'll choose an off beat story. Touring with Ted Nugent in the Midwest back in the winter of 1977. The blizzard of '77 was one of the worst storms on record. After every show when I got back to the hotel, I would turn on the news to see where the storm was headed. It didn't matter how much we moved across the Midwest it seemed that we were always headed to the worst part of the storm. I started thinking Ted was purposely picking the worst parts of the country to play. Any where we went, that's where the storm was. On the way to Montana we ended up in a snow storm like I had never seen. With wind chill it was 67 below zero. It should have been a clue to us that we were the only ones on the highway. After the defrosters stopped working, we tried aiming hair dryers at the windshield, so we could see. Finally the gas lines froze and the bus just came to a stop. You couldn't see the road, it was just a sheet of white. When we opened the door to check things out, Michael Diamond, who is about 6 ft. 2 stepped into snow up to his chest. If the bus had gone another ft. it would have flipped over. We radioed for help, and when the highway patrol got there, he said, what are you guys doing out here ,the road has been closed. We said, were on the Ted Nugent tour, and he looked at us with a kind of expression that said, oh no wonder. Yeah there's a reason I live in California, its real warm here!

Anything you would like to add or say to the readers of FIREWORKS.

MIKE PRINCE: I, from the bottom of my heart, want to thank the many fans we have worldwide for their 25 years of support and that they have given us back much more than we have given them. Keep the flame burnin' we still got some rockin' left to do

ROGER ROMEO: Just thank you very much for the continued interest in our music. It makes our lives worth while to be appreciated!

JEFF POOLE: Yes, to the readers, I hope you find this interview interesting enough to want to listen to LD. LD is a band that always gave everything it had. It spans quite a time frame in music history, and the good thing about it is - we're not done yet...

FIREWORKS

Dare

Darren Wharton In Conversation with Kieran Dargan...

DARE BURST onto the scene in 1988 with the stirring and highly evocative 'Out of The Silence'. Not only did this album showcase the vocal talents of former Thin Lizzy keyboardist Darren Wharton, but it was also the debut for a fresh-faced, but superbly talented Vinny Burns on guitar. The follow up, 'Blood From Stone' was a fair deal heavier and alienated many fans, but looking back it stands the test of time as a veritable classic.

It was many years before the third album was released on MTM. Vinny Burns had long since departed to Ten, via Asia and Ultravox, but the songs were still there, and harked back to the more mellow tones of the debut. Now, after much delay, the fourth album 'Belief' is due to be released at the end of August. Kieran Dargan hooked up with Darren Wharton to find out the story....

So Darren, here we are finally getting the chance to chat about that very elusive fourth Dare album 'Belief', but before we go into the details about that, can I first track back a little to the beginnings of Dare?

"Yeah, initially we wrote and rehearsed for about two years, secured our deal with A&M and recorded 'Out of the Silence' which turned out to be a really good album."

I suppose it is pointed out to you constantly that that album is now considered to be a classic of the genre ?

"It has been mentioned, however even though it was a good album with some great songs I wouldn't regard it as being a 'classic' although it is very nice to see that it's highly regarded by so many people. We had a great time recording it and I am very proud of it and so far it looks to have stood the test of time, which is always a sign of good songs and songwriting."

If I can take you forward to 'Blood from Stone', a move in a heavier direction?

"There was a lot of band wagon jumping going on in those days, everybody started going heavy. That's the music business for you isn't it? One style comes out and everybody copies it, especially in the rock field. I remember looking back at Bon Jovi, they all had the ripped jeans and headbands, and of course there was the Guns and Roses look, you know?"

Dare weren't exactly a million miles away from that 'look' were they?

"I hate to say it, but we were all like sheep back then. Looking back it was definately the wrong thing to do. We should have had the maturity to not jump on the bandwagon."

I think that's a very strong comment you made there, the maturity or lack of it. It's always easy in hindsight to look back and go if only .....but I suppose in the big picture a lack of maturity actually goes towards the establishment of a 'scene'?

"Course it does. If we all didn't come together at that time, some great bands and some great records wouldn't have come out of that era. It's the nature of the business isn't it. As far as Dare are concerned 'Blood from Stone' was too much of a change in direction and we suffered for it in the end really."

It took quite a while before 'Calm Before the Storm' emerged.

"It did. We had the album written for quite a while. When A&M were bought by Polygram, everybody we knew left the label and we were left on our own. We lost our deal."

Did it bother you ?

"Yes it did. It always bothers you when you lose a deal because you're back to square one again, knockin on doors again. 'Calm Before the Storm' had been ready for quite a while and we did quite a lot of knocking on doors with that one , with the majors and....."

And the majors didn't want to know?

"We came close on two occasions. It wouldn't have been a decent enough deal to be honest."

So you were happy enough to go with MTM Records?

"We actually gave up on that album. I moved to Wales and had a son. I basically took a few years off and re evaluated my position within the music business and it was within that period I decided not to chase that big elusive deal anymore and instead we set up our own label Legend Records in 1997. In the meantime I decided to put 'Calm Before the Storm' out on my own label and do it my way and not have to conform to any record company pressures. I had obviously learned my lesson with 'Blood from Stone'. I was disappointed in myself for not sticking to my guns musically."

Did you suffer much of a backlash with Blood from Stone?

"To be honest it was well received by the rock press, but as far as the fans were concerned it wasn't what they were buying a Dare album to hear and I can see that now. If people wanted a heavy rock album there were a lot of bands out there doing it far better than Dare ever would...Lizzy, Bon Jovi, ZZ Top, and my philosophy now let them do it because they do it best, and let me do what I think I do best, a type of atmospheric rock."

What about this description of Dare - soulfully atmospheric?

"That's nice really, that's where we want to go. I like to listen to a record and get lost in it, draw some emotion from it. I know you can do that with heavier tracks as well but the way I tend to write pleases me now because Dare are getting to the point where we can class it as our own sound."

I think you may have succeeded with that one.

"Do you think so? Great, because I've tried to keep that in my thoughts while writing this new album. It's very much me really. It's difficult really because there are a couple of tracks on there that I'm worried about because they will be perceived to be a bit light, but they are still rock tracks, but that's my only fear with this album. The songs came out and I said Christ, I'm going to do this from the heart, I'm not going to be pressured, you know will it be heavy enough ..hahaha ...or will it be too light and be called whimp rock. It's difficult not to have those thoughts... 'Oh quick, I'd better whack some more power chords on there and beef it up'. I've really tried to write a rock album that's honest. I realise I may get some criticisms from some Heavy Metal guys but I'm quite willing to accept that."

But that's the nature of the business isn't it? You can please some of the people some of the time but not all of them all of the time?

"Exactly. I think the only way forward for everybody in the rock business is to find themselves musically and make the records that they feel happiest with. I made my mistake with 'Blood from Stone' . 'Calm Before the Storm' was a stepping stone and I think with 'Belief' we have found what I think is the Dare sound. I'm glad to have got this album out of my system really. I've had the songs with me for years and I just glad they are finally out, and I have just started work on the next album so things are going well."

You started your own label. Are sales something you are interested in?

"Oh yes, very important. That's an ongoing part of putting out albums. You do your best to put out an album people will like and that's as far as it goes really. I'm happy if the album sells 10,000 and the people love it rather than sell 30,000 and...well you know, I wouldn't mind selling 30,000 either...hahahaha.We don't sell massive amounts these days. I think that the 'Calm Before the Storm' album has only sold about 25,000 albums to date."

That's pretty good in this day and age, where rock music isn't exactly flavour of the month

"It's not bad I suppose."

Did that come out in Japan?

"Yes, but to be honest I don't think it's heavy enough for Japan. For whatever reason, possibly going back to 'Blood from Stone', we seem to get filed under Heavy Metal and that's not really where the Dare sound is. Nothing against the heavy side of things, but that's not our thing. I'd like to be classed with Marillion, Pink Floyd, Dire Straits, Genesis, that's where I want to be really. Classic rock I suppose."

Personnel have changed quite a bit over the years. Shelly played with Ten for a bit along with Vinny Burns who's doing very well from himself. Are they guys that played on 'Calm....' still with you on 'Belief'?

"The thing with Dare now is it's really a nucleas of myself, Richie and Andy and it comprises of me sitting in the studio for long....no very long....hahahahaha, periods of time writing and recording and then bringing in a bass player and drummer when we are ready. I can't lie to you and tell you there's five guys in a room swigging beer together. It's basically a couple of us doing the work and then we bring in the guys. We don't really have a rhythm section but we use Julian live and in the studio and he's done a lot of stuff on this album."

Here's question that I know you'll love. Lots of people have seen you live as a duo or even in a semi-acoustic Dare doing unplugged type sets at the Gods in '98 and in Spain in April of this year. What about plugging in the amps again and going out as a fully electric Dare. Will you be supporting this album?

"We will be doing that. We start off in Munich on Aug 14th, the album launch, but it will only be the unplugged version. Touring is very, very expensive...tour bus, hotels every night, wages. I mean that last Lizzy thing we did cost a fortune."

But at least with Thin Lizzy it's an established name, and you get to play decent sized venues.

"Yes, touring is okay if you're playing to 1,000 people a night and you are selling tickets. If you're not it's very difficult to make it pay."

"What about a UK tour, where you have a fairly large long standing support. Lots of people e-mail us here at Fireworks and ask are Dare ever going to tour again in the UK, have they forgotten about us?

"To be honest Kieran, it's a lack of decent venues these days."

Are clubs a problem with you?

"No not really. I know in London there are some decent venues, but throughout the UK...I mean it's been so long since I've toured anyway, I don't know if there are many rock venues left. I know there is a circuit there. What I really would like to do is get a decent support tour. When we were at A&M we supported Gary Moore, Europe and Jimmy Page - that's a great way to tour and you get to play to decent sized audiences. It would be great to do something like that, to re-establish the Dare name. If we were even to do a semi headline tour with another band who had the same problems really, and what I mean is not quite big enough to go out on their own, that could be a good way for us to do it."

Who would you like to go out with?

"I don't know really. I'm sure there are a lot of good bands out there....you'd possibly know better than I would. Who would you think?"

That's nice, reverse the question...hahahaha. How about Bob Catley, or maybe the forthcoming Magnum reunion tour? Ten perhaps, although they have just completed a very successful European tour

"Now Magnum would be a good one. Yeah Magnum, I'd really like that one. Bob Catley and Tony Calrkin are great, that would be a great tour...Magnum and Dare."

What about one off festivals such as the Gods?

"I don't know much about them really. We did the Gods about three years ago. It was the first time Dare played a live gig for years, we sort of rushed everything but is was cool."

So what about this year's festival?

"I don't know , what do you think?"

It's not up to me, but as they used to say in the TV advert 'I know a man who can'. Will I make the necessary enquiries?

"Go for it, tell him get in touch and we'll see if we can arrange something. I do think there is a lot of potential for bands like us to continue in the UK, you know touring. Magnum , Dare...Steve Overland, he's got a great voice. If there was a couple of bands that went out together, maybe four bands, say Magnum, Dare, FM and Pride and did a mini monsters of AOR type tour, you could take that to a lot of nice places and play to good crowds. Same backline, same drums and bring in the individual keyboards and guitars and stuff, then you can tour and make it pay instead of losing money. Use the same crew for the tour and a couple of small buses and you could do wonders for increasing the profiles of the bands again."

[Well, as everyone should now know, this conversation resulted in Dare headlining the Gods on the Saturday night, playing their first electric show in quite some time. After the Saracen reunion, yet another example of the positive outcomes generated by Fireworks Magazine - Ed]

Back to the new album. How many tracks, and of course do the Japanese get the usual bonus track?

"Eleven and bonus track...hmmmm...well, yes...hahahaha!"

So who will handle the record in Japan?

"We haven't signed a deal for Japan yet. The recession is biting hard there and our style of music isn't as popular out thereas it was previously. The last record came out on Pony Canyon but this time round we have been offered something by a new company Yamaha are putting together , but they won't be ready until November so it's pretty much on hold for the moment."

When can we expect to see Belief out in the Europe?

"It will be out in August through Legend Records with distribution by various agencies in different countries. Pinnacle will be handling it in the UK and we are also working on a release for the USA this time around. We do okay out there but we didn't have a proper release out there with 'Calm Before the Storm' but this time it will be different."

I remember our last chat just after 'CBTS' was released, you told me 'Belief' would be out in a matter of months. What happened?

"I was fighting with myself regarding the direction, trying to get the mood of the album right...not too fluffy, not to heavy. Other than that it was just e being indecisive...you know, do I like this, do I like that, is this too heavy, is this too light? Just being fussy really...hahahahahaha!"

So Dare, Zeno and Uli Jon Roth are all currently ensconsed in North Wales, both living and recording. Is there something in the water?

"Yeah, we're starting our own little commune..hahahaha!"

So finally, what are the plans for the future? More Dare albums, maybe some production for outside bands who want to record in your studio?

"Production? No I don't think so - too much bloody hard work. I don't mind doing our own stuff but for others, I don't think so. I'm too bloody indecisive for my own good."

Possibly a good idea, it usually takes about three years to get an album out of you...hahahahaha.

"HAHAHAHAHAHA...no I can honestly tell you, hand on heart there will be a new Dare album ready to go early next year. I'm going to do a Dare album per year from now on until I drop dead. .hahahahahaha!"

So is there anything you would like to add?

"Thanks to everybody who has supported Dare so far. I really hope you enjoy the new album 'Belief' which will be available on August 27th and hopefully we will get to see you all on tour somewhere in the near future."

FIREWORKS

-VAUGHN IN

by Kieran Dargan

THERE WAS a little disappointment for some last year that Vaughn's debut album, 'Soldiers and Sailors on Riverside', wasn't a return to the Tyketto sound loved by many. However, it was still a great album and the following UK tours were highly successful. Now, on the verge of a new album and yet another greatly anticipated UK tour and Z Rock appearance, Kieran Dargan drags Danny Vaughn out of the rehearsal room to chat about the new album.

'Fearless' is the title of the new album. Where exactly did you get the title from?

"Well, in relation to the song itself, I noticed that I was writing primarily about two subjects - anger and fear. I find more and more it seems to be the two real problems that the world has and it's all central to people. People run around for years doing the same old things and then all of a sudden, they hit a certain age and start running around for the last ten years of their life trying to cram everything in wondering why they never lived in the first place. It also refers to picking your friends because those are the friends you want to be with or being in a relationship with somebody because you want to be, not because somebody tells you it's okay...kind of turning your nose at conventionality and basically doing your own thing."

Danny Vaughn is a storyteller first and foremost, however this time round you seem to have dug deeper and come up with a lot of personal and social commentary, would it be fair to say that it borders on Americana?

"That's natural for me. I think it goes that way because I'm primarily an acoustic guitar player. Take a song like 'Just like That', that's very much in the John Cougar vein...the storytelling thing, very American. I'm sure if I spent more time in Europe I would try my hand at telling European stories but seeing as I don't, I can't."

So it would be fair to say it is a pretty good comparison?

"Yes I think so. I grew up listening to Bob Dylan and the Beatles, so I guess I'm thoroughly confused...hahahaha."

When we last spoke a few months back you were telling me you were looking forward to making a big rock record just for the fun of it. It hasn't really turned out that way has it? I mean it has some big rocking moments but there is a lot if acoustic stuff in there as well, especially the rather strange 'Dulcimer Street'?

"It kind of is. I guess if you look back there has always been one odd ball on every record. This was a sort of acoustic thing and the producer came up with the drum loop, which for us put a Peter Gabriel spin on it. I think one thing that maybe people don't understand is when you latch on to something that is new for you, you find it very exciting...'Wow, we've never done that, sounding like Gabriel...cool...wow.' The song is basically about the American civil war."

Yeah, you seemed to approach it from a southern point of view?

"Yeah, I did. I'm hoping it won't bite me in the ass some day. It's a complete fantasy piece, first of all nobody came home happy from that one. They all came home missing limbs, there were no big turnouts and fanfares because the south was pretty badly crushed. I'm a big history buff and I guess there was a certain romance about that period of time. Everybody was really big into flowery speeches and stuff but it's not really based on any real life experience I read about."

'Million Miles of Road' kind of sums up your life on the road over the past sixteen years or so, especially the line 'I've still got plenty of miles in the tank left'. Does this mean Vaughn are destined to tour the highways and by ways for the next twenty years?

"Hahahahahaha...yeah God, I hope so. We feel now we've planted our feet in a record very firmly that can be released in America. 'Soldiers and Sailors' still feels to me like my favourite record as far as being a writer, this one is still brand new...it always takes me a while to make my own assessment. To me 'Soldiers & Sailors' was a deliberate attempt to make a seventies record while this one is very modern sounding so we're really going to make a major play to get this one released in America by a record company. Yeah...'Million Miles of Road'. I suppose it started with me on 'Soldiers....', digging deeper into myself for lyrical inspiration and with 'Million Miles....' it was around the time of my birthday and I got to asking myself 'What have I done? How is my life going?' and it's funny but If you want to hear God laugh, tell him your plans. Yeah, I guess I'm destined for life on the road, or at least a good portion of it...hahahahahaha."

I noticed on some songs on the album there was a very modern edge on some songs

"That was down to the producer and the engineer who came at us with different ideas, certainly different to what we would have had in mind but they were good ideas."

In the album review I mentioned that the band were leaving behind the albatross that was 'Don't Come Easy 'and heading for pastures new.

"You've coined a few phrases there."

Well I know that everybody constantly makes reference to 'Don't Come Easy' and especially 'Forever Young'. Surely you must be tired of everybody asking for another 'Forever Young', so is 'Don't Come Easy 'in fact an albatross?

"No, not really. Honestly and truthfully if I didn't ever have to perform 'Forever Young' again I probably wouldn't cry. It's not because I dislike the song, it's the only song I have ALWAYS played live, every single time, and of course we will be playing it again this time. I guess I don't really realise what an impact it had. Even here I run into people who may barely have heard of Tyketto but they have heard that song, so not playing it would be suicidal."

I was wondering if you are familiar with TNT's 'Transistor' and the song 'Crashing Down' in particular .The reason I ask is because the closing section of 'Was There a Moment' is very similar to a song of a similar name on the TNT album?

"Oh no, shit! Tony's never going to let me live that one down. Ah crap, I hate him having one up on me, hahahahahahaha!!"

So the forthcoming tour, the third in two year. Nothing for five years and then all of a sudden two albums and three tour in two years...Mr productivity all of a sudden. So I guess you still love the road then?

"Yeah, to me the biggest bummer is I come in and in two weeks I'm done ...damn...I'm just getting good at this. I'm just warming up. This one is just to let people know there is a new record available, even before it's out, which may or may not be suicidal. We feel we have a strong enough fan base that we'll be able to do that but what we're really setting up for is a more extensive thing in March taking in a lot more of Europe."

So that's Europe taken care of, do you have anything happening in the USA?

"We have bunch of meetings lined up so when we get back after making some noise in the UK, which is always good coming off a good tour, we hope to get something happening. I'll be poking my nose in anywhere I can. It's been a very nice part time thing but we would really love to get it back to full time. The thing is in the USA, and it's not so much the money, but if they sign you they have to get you out touring, and that would help get it back to being a full time thing, but you know you never can tell with record companies. I know, I work for one."

Oh yes, I forgot...you are still doing the A&R thing for Atlantic.

"Yes I am, and don't ask me why I don't sign myself...don't do it...don't ask, everybody else does."

So why not then?

60 MINUTES-

"Because it's ethically incorrect as you know...hahahahahaha!"

Obviously a major label is out of the question in the states?

"Not necessarily. I have meeting with one or two when I get back."

So how are rehersals going?

"Very well. You just interrupted 'Burning Down Inside', hahahaha. Jamie flies in today. We have been rehearsing without him for about five days, so the next week will be pretty constant bashing them out day after day. The new material translates well to playing live so we think we have the right mix of new songs with older material."

So how many new ones do you think you'll be playing?

"About six. Yes, six I think."

So it's going to be a very long set than is it...hahaha? That's my way of saying that you really can't afford to drop very much of the older material without fear of being lynched?

"True. I want to play some stuff off 'Soldiers...'. I can't remember how many Tyketto songs will be in the set but we have a few surprises in store. We'll be doing some acoustic numbers with some of the old stuff which should be fun."

So rehersal is going well. Touring personnel are still the same...Danny, Mike, Jamie, PJ and Kyle?

"Yep, exactly the same."

I thought PJ was playing really, really well on the new album.

"Thanks, I'll pass that on to him. He was a totally different animal in the studio this time round because this time he knew what he was getting himself into. Last time the poor kid just had this panicked look on his face. This time from the rhythm standpoint both he and Kyle were full of ideas. When I got in they were...you know, I was thinking what about this chord change, what about this, that and the other. The chorus on 'Haunted'...PJ came up with that. There was a lot more creative input from both of them this time round and I think it shows. In fact the whole recording process was very quick for me and that wasn't always the case with Tyketto where it took a while, but this time it was five on the first day, and then two a day over the next two days and all of a sudden it was done...I'm going 'Can I do that again please?' just so as I can stay in the studio."

So do you hang around for the whole process or do you get kicked out when others are doing their thing?

"I am there with the iron grip and Michael is the other hand with the iron grip, we basically hold a testicle each. I have great trust in Paul Orifino now and that's cool because he can go oh you're doing this or that and I'll go, 'Okay, I'll drop by later and lend my two cents'. But yes, if you have a real strong vision you have to be there to guide everything along, but as far as the project goes it was real loose with room for everybody to work, not as planned as previous recording sessions for whatever reasons but it worked out real well."

At thirty eight minutes and only nine songs, you could get a bit of a backlash in the value for money stakes?

"Or you could say you got nine really, really solid songs as opposed to a sixty minute album with nine really solid songs and four pieces of shit."

Well yes, but with the vast majority of releases in this genre recently it tends to be 10-12 tracks per album.

"It just worked out that way, it wasn't planned, but I do have to say AOR or otherwise bands are making records way too fucking long. I'm not saying I wouldn't have gone another two songs if they were right there and solid and strong, because there were definitely some alternatives and they may resurface, but they didn't stand as a unit. That's the first thing Mark Alger said when he got the masters was 'My CD player says only 38 minutes...what the hell?" You may be right, we may need another track, but listen to it through. After he did he didn't mind anymore...it flows, it feels like a solid piece. We considered another song but it would have affected the continuity. There have been some great records shorter than that."

The debut Boston album.

"Yeah, I like that, and Diver Down was only like twenty nine minutes or so...."

Yes, but that was back in the days of vinyl. Everybody knows a CD is 74 minutes.

"I know, I know but a lot of the time I think bands feel obligated to fill that space up. There are very few bands that I can listen to for seventy four minutes, that's crazy. Maybe like Queensryche's 'Operation Mindcrime', that's cool, but a lot of bands coming from England right now are depressing. I can't listen to them for an hour no matter how good they are. Somebody must have had decent parents in the last 20 years. Every now and then my sister and I turn to my father and complain that we were neither beaten or abused...'It's your fault I have a lack of subject matter for my next album!', hahaha."

'Fearless'and 'Haunted', these are the big ones. What about all those who are waiting for a rewrite of the first Tyketto album? Is it safe to say we'll never hear that type of stuff again?

"I think it's safe to say if you don't hear it in 'Haunted' and 'Fearless' there's something wrong with you. .hahahaha."

It's not that we don't hear it, but for those that want to hear seven of those and three ballads going back to the way albums were made years ago...

"I don't know...what comes comes. For me 'Fly Away' has a huge chorus as well, it just isn't produced as such. I'm going to tread this ground very carefully here, there are a number of bands that get featured in magazines such as yours and others that specialise in AOR that kind of caught the wave at the time who really weren't that good at it, but have now said this is our niche and this is where we're staying. For me personally, I don't think I should stay in the one place...I don't like getting slammed into that pocket but I won't run away from it intentionally either. I write what I write and we'll see where it goes later."

I do remember you telling me that the big chorus does come naturally to you.

"Pretty much. It all to me has it's roots in folk music really, we all use the same chords, just differently, but it's where I come from."

Having listened to 'Fearless' yourself , is it safe to say it could have possibly been the follow on to Strength in Numbers, even more so that 'Soldiers and Sailors...' in as much as it has a similar feel?

"I think that's a good thing. I'll have to ask Michael and Jamie what they think of that, that's interesting. I do think there is a little more Tyketto in this record than 'Soldiers...' but that's an after thought. It's when you step back you go....oh look at that, but at no point did we sit down and say we need to write 'Forever Young' or 'Wings' again. But 'Haunted' could have easily been on a Tyketto record."

You are obviously looking forward to the tour. Any chance of a sneak preview of the set list?

"Nah, it would spoil the fun, but I think 'Is That All There Is' has to be in there and the amount of requests we get for 'Soldiers and Sailors' possibly means we couldn't leave it out. There a few surprises and little quirky things to look forward to."

I have to say it's great to see you back on the bill for Z Rock again.

"Yeah, after a lot of kicking and screaming. I was like hello, I am literally in the neighbourhood."

So finally is there anything you would like to tell all the fans out there?

"We look forward to catching up with all our friends on this tour, it will be great. See you in about a week or so."

FIREWORKS

Harem Sc

Bouncing Back!!

HAREM SCAREM have been one of the most contentious bands in recent melodic rock history. Constantly changing their sound from album to album, alienating many fans in the process, they finally changed their name to Rubber to further distance themselves from their melodic hard rock roots and concentrate on modern power pop. But now, having completed their album deal with Warners, the boys have resumed their career as Harem Scarem with the promise of a new, classic sounding album next year. Was this part of the long term game plan, or just cynical retreating in the face of the commercial failure of Rubber? Kieran Dargan chatted to a surprisingly candid Harry Hess to get the details...

So how did you enjoy playing Nemelrock in Spain?

"Oh awesome, I had a great time. I really liked it. I spent a lot of time in the studio recording with Rafa Martin but it was a nice change. The show was fun and went off okay, all things considered. Those festival things can be a problem. We didn't have our own sound man you know. It went as well as can be expected I'd say.

I was reading some comments that people made on various internet message boards about your performance, stuff like the guys were teasing us with the first three or four chords of certain songs and then they'd go 'Oh, we can't remember that," and launch into something new from 'Ultra Feel' or 'Rubber' which didn't really go down too well amongst some, others took it as a rather larger dose of tongue in cheek.

"HAHAHAHAHA!!! Well that's what it was. You know what? We seriously don't know those songs. Pete and I could maybe make our way through them but Barry and Creighton weren't even in the band when we played that stuff live. Because it was never part of our set list after they joined, they didn't know them.To tell you the truth they may not have heard some of them ..hahaha."

The next time you take a trip to Europe you are going to have to have them learn them off or you might get lynched...hahaha.

"We'll get working on them right away."

We'll have Harem Scarem karaoke. You stand up on stage and the audience can call the songs, you guys just play 'em

"We'll need a karaoke bassist and drummer though."

You were saying the new record was going back to basics. I realise that basics may not be the best description there as with Harem Scarem's track record you have always tended to do different things and not be repetitive, but the sound on the new record may lean towards that of the first two albums?

"Everybody we've been talking to seems really excited about us making that kind of a record and you know, it piqued our couriosity too. It has been so long since we'd done a record like that that it would be cool to go back and make that kind of a record again, not only to prove it to our fans that we can still do it, but to ourselves too. I know for a fact we can, it's not a mystery how we did them, it's just a matter of putting our heads back into that mindspace while making the record. On recent records everything was less technical and production was a bit rawer, and to make a record like this is far more technical which means we are going to have to work harder this time, hahahahaha."

Most people you talk to always say 'Mood Swings' was a benchmark release and practically every label at one point or other has stated that so and so's new record sounds like 'Mood Swings' Harem Scarem . Is that something of a mill-stone around your neck or are you happy just to acknowledge the fact that six or seven years down the line the album still stands up?

"That's the way we have always looked at it. People are very confused about us, especially people that don't know us personally or never get the chance to talk to us. It usually surprises us how people think about us in our mindset about what we think about past records. Maybe it's our own fault because of some of the things we have said in the past because we are the type of band that has never made the same record twice, or we've tried not to. I mean when we made our first record people went 'Okay, this is what Harem Scarem sound like'. When we did 'Mood Swings' they went 'What the fuck are you doing? What is this? It sounds like a different band'. We have already had that with 'Mood Swings' and then when a lot of people discovered the band because of 'Mood Swings' that's what they thought we were about. Then when we made 'Voice of Reason' they went 'What the fuck are you doing?' again. That's happened to us with every record. What people have to understand is we've never made a record that's popular at any given time, we've always made the next record as the record people didn't want us to make, at least it's always felt that way to us."

So do you wear your unpredictability as a badge of honour then?

"I guess so, it's just something that happens after the fact. It's not something you consciously set out to do just for the sake of doing it. I want to make a record to do something different as in try not to repeat myself, but getting back to the original question we haven't made that kind of a record in a long time. We've done straight ahead melodic rock, we've done some pretty technical melodic rock, we've done darker stuff and some power pop so now we're going to go back again. It's not going to be a rip off of 'Mood Swings', we wouldn't want to do that I guess to give the best example is, us putting more technical guitar playing into the song writing and focusing on more backing vocals and stuff like that. My biggest influences have always been Queen, Boston Def Leppard etc. When it comes to the backing vocals and the melodies it will be the same, just more of it probably."

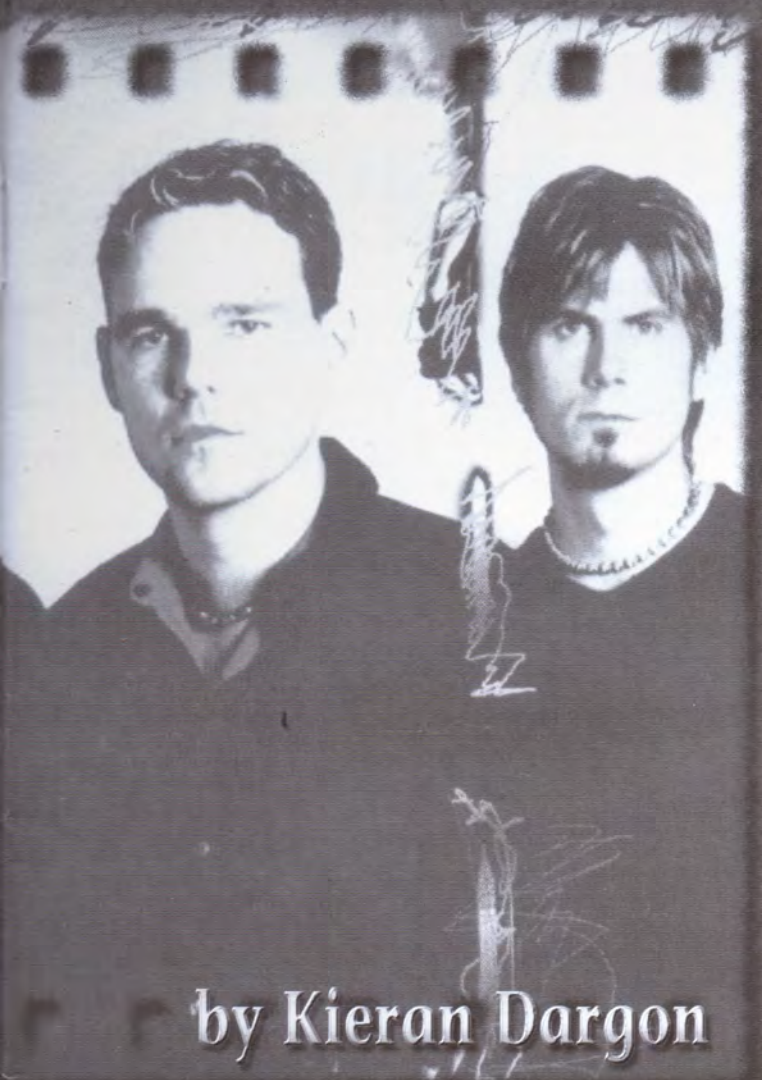
So have you actually started work on the new record yet?

"Pete and I have a few ideas which we have been kicking around but we have a few other projects which we have to finish first before we can start work in earnest. I would hope to get started in the next few weeks."

So after ten years at Warner Brothers you are suddenly free agents? Are you happier that you can now do things that you want to without record company guys sticking their oar in every now and then ('scuse the pun)?

"Yes, absolutely. We had a lot of friends at Warner and we had a good deal of success with them in Japan and in other territories around the world...at the same time we were trapped, as regards doing any other deals around the world where Warner wanted nothing to do with us. I mean the UK and America are two of the biggest music markets in the

arem



by Kieran Dargon

world and they didn't like the band and never released us. That was always a major bone of contention between us and the label, they could never get anything going in those countries. I think now with our direction very focused musically and with two labels involved that know the type of music, we all understand each other, we know what type of record we are making, what type of record we are trying to sell and to whom we are trying to sell it. With Warner, if it didn't fit in a certain category and wasn't popular at a certain time they didn't care about it, even if you gave them a great rock record. They are trying to sell with the least resistance, throw out what's trendy and sell to the masses. We never, never, never, never tried to do that . With the Rubber record it was possibly the closest thing we ever came to being hip with what was happening musically."

Do you think towards the end they tried to push the band into the trendy end of things, desperate for a crossover hit in comparison to what I understand in the early days they were content to give you a pretty much free reign?

"I think they'd written us off as a band they were excited about. We were there for ten or eleven years while most record company people last six maybe twelve months. We were there longer than any employee so it just got old. I think our relationship should have ended after the third record."

Why do you think you lasted so long?

"We made money for them. We sold records and that's why. They wouldn't let us go. We had a contract to make seven records for them, seven new material records - not compilations. All the other spin off's were the result of the Japanese label wanting to release more product. We are always writing songs and we own our own studios so it's not a problem but I think they took advantage of the fact we were capable of doing that and saturated the market and for the most part hosed the hard core fans into buying all this extra shit. We said it to them on many occasions, we turned down many opportunities to put out extra records and rehash the same songs again and again with a bonus track here and there. In their defense they said we're putting it out, if they don't want it they won't buy it...people kept buying it though."

We actually accused you guys of suffering from Mr Bigitis...

"Well that's where it comes from. We had the same A&R guy, the same mentality...get it out there, sell sell sell!"

Looking at Harem Scarem from your own perspective, through all the various twists and turns you have taken over the years, where do you see Harem Scarem going in the future? What's the plan?

"We weren't even 100% sure we were going to continue, and that was only about six months ago. I always said to Pete, when this deal is over I don't know if I want to keep doing this. That was always our cut off, when we were done with Warner we'd step back and look at things. I think in the last year we realised we wanted to finished something that we started but had been unable to. Maybe subconsciously when the deal was over and I could walk away, I didn't want to. You know going to Spain or Japan this time was great. I went of my own free will this time as against the feeling of I had to go. I feel the same about making records now. I'm making them because I can and I want to, not because a contract says I have to. The reality of it is we have a lot of really, really loyal fans all over the world and right now we want to make records that will please them."

Japan has always been your biggest market, while you did well in Canada in the early years - maybe not that great in latter years. Does it surprise you the level of support you have outside these markets?

"It does. I don't have a clue how many records we sold throughout Europe, we can only guess. A little over 100,000 units maybe, over seven records because a lot of records would have been Japanese or Canadian imports. We haven't spent a lot of time touring there or doing press but that will change I guarantee. But when we do talk to people they talk about the first two and 'Voice of Reason' to a lesser extent as being popular rock records."

You have done the groundwork in Europe, maybe unknown to yourselves with the first two records. What's the situation in Japan? Is Japan still as important to you, and moreover how will it affect you now that you don't have to pander to the demands of a record company who wants to sell at least 50,000 units?

"Absolutley. We are going to make the type of record we want to make. What it comes down to is the quality of songwriting and that's up to us to make it a good record. I don't care what type of records we make as long as they are good, be it rock or whatever. In Japan we could have sold double what we did if we had done what the record company asked of us, it would have been very easy, but there is something more important than sales and selling records - that is being in the studio knowing you are making the best record you can, as opposed to knowing we could sell X amount if we had done as we were asked."

Of course it's always nice to know you can sell X amount.

"It is, and if you don't have the support of the record company you won't be making them or selling them. You always have to keep that in mind and walk a line between commerce and creativity."

What about bootlegs? There are lots and lots of Harem Scarem bootlegs floating around. I know there are at least 6 discs of demos, unreleased and live material being heavily traded. Should we all send you a dollar per disc?

"Hahaha...man that's crazy. I don't even have that stuff. Fuck, I turfed that stuff...I'd love to have some of that stuff now. I've written over 150 songs of which about 70/80 may have been recorded and the rest...wow, I can't believe fans would go to those lengths. I love seeing bootlegs of my favourite bands. It's the hardcore fans who collect these. I mean if I was to go get a bootleg I more than likely own their studio records anyway, you know."

On the live front you got to play in Spain and then you went to Japan. So what's it like to be the Beatles for a week?

"Hahaha...It was tough actually. When we came back we went from Tokyo to Germany, then to London then Toronto, a lot of travel in 30 hours. We did three gigs: Osaka, Nagoya and Quattro. Our last tour was ten dates, this time they were a little apprehensive because we had changed the name to Rubber but it went great. We sold out and it was a lot of fun."

You have a new deal in Europe with Now and Then. Want to tell us about it?

"Well we actually came close with another label also, but I like Mark Ashton and I got a vibe from him that he understood what we were doing so I was very happy to sign with them."

So will you actually get out and play in Europe this time?

"Hahahaha.....see you at the Gods!!"

I just thought of something. Patricia the lead singer of Nexx...you had just walked in to the club when she was singing 'Distant Memory'. Had you ever heard somebody doing your stuff before?

"Yeah in a club in Canada they did 'No Justice' years ago, but Patricia was really cool."

So you invited her up on stage to sing lead vocals. How did she do?

"She was great, she was fantastic. It was really weird but great fun."

So I guess I'll see you in November then.

"Alright. I'm looking forward to it already!"

FIREWORKS

DOOGIE WHITE

In Conversation with Sue Ashcroft...

WHAT'S THE connection between penguins with a love of space travel, a doll, Ritchie Blackmore and a hatred of football bigotry? Give in? Well in 1986 I let a couple of musicians on their way from Motherwell to London sleep on my living room floor. One of those poor musicians turned out to be the very talented Doogie White of La Paz, Midnight Blue, Rainbow, Chain and now the wonderful Cornerstone. I got a call from Doogie and we caught up on everything that's been happening to him in the intervening years and it proved more entertaining than I could have imagined.

Tell me, how did the Arrival album come about? Whose idea was it?

"It was Steen Mogensen`s, the bass player from Royal Hunt. I got a phone call from his management, they're based in Long Island, New York, and they asked me if I would be interested in singing on his album. To be honest with you, I'd never heard of Royal Hunt, I don't know, its a very European rock kind of thing I am unfamiliar with. As soon as I was asked to do the album though, I started doing some checking with various folk and they're a very popular band...700,000 albums sold! So then Steen called me and said 'Do you fancy singing on my album?' So I got him to send the songs over and it's his idea. He wrote, recorded, produced, played bass and keyboards and he's got all the guys from Royal Hunt and another couple of Danish guys playing on it. He just needed a vocalist. He had heard me singing with Rainbow in Japan and he thought that I was the guy he wanted. I was flattered, so that's how it came about. It's done very well and the record company has asked for 2 more. In its genre, it's apparently one of the best selling records of the year, which is nice."

So you didn't know him at all?

"I'd never met him before. Well, we did meet when...that's for a rainy day..."

Are you pleased with the way the album has turned out?

"I'm very pleased. It was progressive, more pomp than the stuff I'm used to doing. We had three days when we could do it, when Steen and I weren't busy. So I flew out at some ridiculous time, 6 or 7 in the morning, to Copenhagen and we just spent 3 days doing all the vocals, spending anything from 9to 10 hours a day getting as much done as we could and we did 2 or 3 takes of each song. Then I just left Steen to put it all together. I think he's done a great job of it and he should be very proud. It was very different from anything I've ever done, so I had a lot of fun doing it. It wasn't like me going in and doing my normal rawk style. I got to throw it around a lot more and say 'well this is a bit more Bowie or a wee bit more Robert Plant or a bit more this or that' and throw my voice around in different ways so it was very interesting for me to do."

I found that there were a lot of styles I personally could hear in there like Magnum, Dare, FM and Glenn Hughes. I got quite a lot of a feel of that from it. The FM connection, you seem to have done quite a few things with Jem (Davis) over the years.

"Yes, Jem is an old mate of mine and a great keyboard player. Comparisons to these other bands you have mentioned are quite flattering but I know that Steen has never heard of them apart from Glenn of course, so it is purely coincidence if, and I don't necessarily agree, that there is a similarity."

How did you get involved with the tribute albums?

"I got involved with the tribute albums because I'm recording a solo album at the moment and I was at that time looking for a deal for it, so I went to the record company and said 'Look, I've got these demos'. I know the guy who runs the studio and who's the British partner in the record company and I went to him and he said 'We're not signing anybody Dougie. We're only signing people with back catalogues we can buy, but we're doing this Iron Maiden tribute album and a Whitesnake tribute album. Would you like to be involved?' So, having auditioned for Maiden in a previous life, I thought okay, that'll be a bit of a giggle, just so that people can hear what it would have sounded like had I got the gig in Maiden as opposed to Blaze. The Whitesnake stuff, well, I've been a fan of theirs since I was 15 or 16 years old. I even roadied for them at Glasgow Apollo on the 'Come and Get It' tour. Coverdale was the man then, all the boys wanted to be him and all the girls wanted to bed him."

The tribute I'm on about specifically though was the Thin Lizzy one which I reviewed in a previous issue of Fireworks. You sang 'Emerald' which is one of my favourite songs, but you worked on that with Lea Hart.

"Well, Lea Hart does all the tribute albums over here. He's the producer and he has the same background boys who do drums and bass, so it would be Pete Jupp from FM on drums, it'll be Merv or Neil Murray on bass and then he has a huge selection of guitar players. Whether it be Bernie Torme or Mickey Moody or whoever coming in and playing as well as Jem doing the keyboards. I actually did two more tracks on the Thin Lizzy one. I did 'Jailbreak' and 'Dancing in the Moonlight' but for whatever reason they didn't get used on the album (I think actually Lea sings one) so I only got one track on that album. I met some interesting people doing those albums."

After you did 'Stranger In Us All' you said you were hoping to record another album with Rainbow but there were some problems with Blackmore's management? Why didn't it happen? Is it because he's a complete nutter?

"No, of course not, I don't think he's a nutter at all. I know that Ritchie was already, in his mind, set that he wanted to go and do renaissance music with Candice. He had this itch that had to be scratched I don't want to ruin anybody`s image here but I always found Rich to be engaging company, good fun to be around. He`s quite normal really and finds the myths surrounding him rather odd. For instance, when I was going over to audition for Rainbow, I was going to meet a man who lived with his mother and 11 cats who would eat me up and have me meet Satan. Its all just 'Hey we are all normal people, Satan is no more real than god. I don't really have a cape made from Crowley`s curtains that's just silly.' Anyway, I honestly thought that his sojourn into renaissance music would just be for one record. I didn't realise he was going to spend the rest of his career on it! But, the lure of the lute and the taste of the mead have proved too much thus far (laughs). I thought that after he had done one record he could have come back and we could have done another Rainbow album together no problem."

And you don't think that's going to happen now?

"Well, you know, we can answer that later on, but I think that he could have run the two side by side. I know he loves to RAWK, its in his blood, we are what we are. I hope he finds peace with Candice, playing the music he loves, dressed up like his fifteenth century alter ego as it were, and then comes back and comes home and does the rock stuff that everybody loves him for. I mean, he has earned the right to do what ever he wants to do. It's so wonderful to hear him playing 12 string guitar again, I love it, but hey man, strap on the Strat, throw away the pointy hat and don that demonic demeanour, and lets get down to some serious rockin'. I've been sitting on 10 or 12 songs that I've had for the next Rainbow album (should it ever happen), waiting on it. I think I've got the hint now though (laughs). There are two other guys in line before me I would imagine, but I had a good chat with Ronnie, and he is not interested anymore. Apparently there was a Japanese thing in 97/98 but Ritchie's management sat on it and the moment was lost.. Ritchie knows where I am and he knows how to get in contact with me should he ever require my services again, and I'd be more than happy to do it. It was a great experience. It was a lot of fun."

I can tell that you enjoyed working with him.

"I did. He was very inspirational. It was interesting to see how a guy that I had admired since I was a schoolboy worked. You hear all the stories about how he works, and to be actively involved in that situation and to watch how the songs develop, which was a completely different style of songwriting from anything I had done with La Paz, Midnight Blue, Chain or subsequently anything I have done since. Just to go and hire a huge old castle or, well, it was a colonial house in upstate New York, and just jam for three weeks and whatever worked, worked and whatever didn't work we recycled again later. It was fantastic!"

So the songs that you're sitting on...are they songs that you wrote with Ritchie or are they ones that you've written with Alex?

"There are three songs that I had from old rehearsal tapes that I found in Scotland in amongst the stuff I had stored at my brothers' house. 'Ask God For That' was one and it should have made the album, as should 'Judgement Day' but you have to decide what works and what don't. I was searching through the stuff and I found a tape that said 'Rainbow' and it had three or four ideas on it, so I finished them and they're sitting there waiting for him [Ritchie]. Rich and I wrote those tunes. The other things are just melodies and lyrics I've been working on with riffs. You can't take him in a complete song because then he has nowhere to go with it. You take him in rough ideas, in the keys he likes to play solos in and likes to jam in and in the tempos he likes to work in. There's plenty of ideas there."

That will be interesting.

"I hope so. I'm doing a solo record at the moment called 'As Yet Untitled' and I'm doing two of the songs on there. I'm not sitting around waiting on any more! I can take a hint. The title is a nod to the old KERRANG days when the journalist would say so and so is in the studio in Milton Keynes recording the new album as yet untitled....."

A lot of the musicians that you are going to feature on your solo album are people you have worked with in the past. How did you decide who you wanted to use? Did it just kind of happen?

"It just kind of happened. Alex (Dickson) and I wrote the bulk of the material together after I left Rainbow and he left Bruce's (Dickinson) band. Ashley (Limer) and I worked together in Chain and I like the way that he writes. He's got a great ear for melody and if you just point him in a direction and let him go he runs with it. Though its mostly me and wee Al we just gel, he is very creative and we have an understanding. A structure and an idea and he just runs with it. It wasn't very difficult for me to pick the guitar players I wanted to work with, in fact I've got Chic McSherry (La Paz) who's going to play on a couple of the tracks."

I heard. I sent him an e-mail headed 'The Ferry Café, Gourock'. He wrote back and said 'Bloody hell, that is a blast from the past! I didn't think anybody remembered me from those days!' He was my hero when I was 15!

"He was MY hero when I was 15 too!"

I remember going to see him in Red Ellis and he was playing 'You Really Got Me' and doing all the Jimi Hendrix behind the head and playing with is teeth thing and I thought 'Wow! What a guy!'

"And then we found out he could actually play, and I had to get him to stop doing that tooth thing! So, when I decided to do a solo album I thought okay, I've got to have him play, he's such an original player, great sound, Chic andhis Gordon Smith Les Paul Jnr. I am looking forward to that unique brand of guitar playing that only Chic can play with his teeth! However the dentist's told him he has to play with his fingers, us Scots of a certain age are products of the school dentist!"

What is your solo album going to sound like?

"It's heavy rock music, it's guitar based, but what I'm liking is that the influences are coming from many different directions and because I'm not locked into anybody else thinks I should be doing, I'm paying for it all so I have free reign to do what I like. I have enough material here for a couple of albums because I've been sitting here writing since just before I quit Rainbow. I've been sitting writing songs with Alex, with Ashley, on my own, and I have a shed load of songs to pull from, but I wanted to make it a more modern style of heavy rock music. Still with the big guitars, still with the thundering drums and great bass lines and howling vocals, but just using modern technology a bit more. It's weird, using modern technology to try to get that 1970's feel we all enjoyed so much! I'm just back from the studio actually. It has much more in common with the Stone Temple Pilots and Soundgarden than Purple or Free. I got Gary Liederman involved, because I play in a bar band with Gary (he's the bass player). I met Neil Murray in Sainsburys in the town where I live, and we got chatting and I said 'Neil, I'm doing an album, would you like to play bass on it?' and he said yes!"

I think he's another one like Don Airey and other greats. They work on things they WANT to work on. They do things that interest them rather than because they have to. They've been there and done that in their careers, so I think that would give them more commitment in the things they do get involved in.

"That's very true. Neil said 'Take me for a coffee and we'll talk about it', so I took him to Cafe Nero and bought him a coffee. We chatted about it...he asked me what I wanted and I told him and he said he would love to do it, so Neil's going to be playing bass on three tracks. Gary's going to be playing on six of them. I've got a guy called Benji Reid who used to drum with Ted Nugent in the states - he's a great drummer and I'm going to have Jem playing keyboards because there is no better keyboard player than Jem. It's going to be a heavier, raw, rock album. You have to spend a lot of money to get a RAW rock album these days though. Deep Purple recorded 'Deep Purple In Rock' on an 8 track machine. I'm using 36 tracks and trying to reproduce the sound that they got! Oh for that Martin Birch drum sound."

You should just set all the stuff up in your bedroom and record it straight off!

"Well, maybe you just have to be these people to get that sound, that's what I'm finding out."

What about XFM?

"XFM is myself, Andy Barnett,Gary Liederman and Benji Reid. We go round playing rock covers that we like. It's nothing to do with FM. It's just a bunch of us getting together to play rock music for rock punters so we can have a

bit of a laugh. We do about 3 or 4 gigs every two or three months."

Now, tell me about this band Sacktrick. 'Penguins on the Moon'. What is THAT all about?!

"That's nothing to do with me! Isn't it great?" I haven't heard it, I've only read about it.

"It's fantastic. It's Chris Dale who was the bass player in Atom Seed and played bass for Bruce Dickinson He's a bit of a strange lad is Chris. The first album was called 'Mystery Rabbits' and it was a collection of songs with different people playing on them. I mean, they have Swedish tourists that they've picked up at tube stations, took them back and made them sing songs. I turned up at the studio one day to borrow a guitar (The studio? t was Alex's LIVING ROOM!) and I got roped into singing a song in the style of Harry Lauder. So, when they were doing the second album, 'Penguins on the Moon', they decided that I could have a character in it because it's like a little musical about these penguins that are fed up getting their little feet frozen off. They see the moon and think it looks warm and nice and they're fed up with fish, so they decide they're going to leave the planet and they build a rocket with flippers (at this point I'm on the floor and I have to get an entire roll of loo paper I'm crying so hard)...and they fly off up to the moon. Of course when they get there they find out it's not all it's cracked up to be and that penguins don't really like cheese, they really like fish after all. So, how are they going to get back home? I'm playing the captain I'm the guy who's instigated the whole thing so I have to try to get them home. They've actually got a tour going on, but I can't do the tour with them because I only come on and sing four lines. It was actually four lines they wanted David Coverdale to sing but they couldn't afford him, so I have to do my best David Coverdale impression. Whenever they play in the London area though, I go and burst onto the stage, sing my four lines and leave! And I get a PINT for it! Then of course there's the Nostradamus project. Have you heard of a band called Brazen Abbott?"

Yes. Glenn Hughes, Joe Lynn Turner...

"Yes, and a guy called Nic Kotzev. Nic's the guitar player and the writer. He's doing an album under his own name that's about the prophecies of Nostradamus. That's myself, Joe Lynn, Glenn Hughes, Goran Edman, Alannah Myles and Sass Jordan. It should be due for release in the summer time. It's very exciting. If you go onto the Brazen Abbott website you'll be able to find out all about that. It's really good. He's got the Bulgarian junior Philharmonic Orchestra playing on it, he's got the guys from Europe playing on it and it's quite an astounding piece of work."

Now, what's this business about Action Man?

"Action Man...well I'm the voice of Action Man 2000-2001! (sings) 'Action Man the greatest hero of them all!'"

How did that come about?

"Someone asked me if I would be interested in doing the advert and, of course, being a child of the 60's Action Man was my hero so I thought right, okay. So I went in and auditioned, it was me and 12 other guys to go in and sing the jingle. I went in and did it, never thought any more about it till Alex phoned me and said that he'd been watching Cat Deeley on the TV on the Saturday morning and he'd heard me singing. He said 'Did you do an Action Man Advert?' and I said yes I did, but I'd forgotten about it. I said how did you know it was me and he said 'Come on man, I've known you for 15 years.' So that's how that happened."

Now, the only reason I'm going to ask you this question is because people ask me it all the time, but would you ever consider moving back to Motherwell?

"Maybe I'll move back one day, probably not to Motherwell though. Been there done that. There is sometimes a wee longing when you are away. I miss the same folk sitting on the same bar stools in the same pubs talking the same shite they were talking twenty years ago. Interestingly I go to the same pub and talk the same shite to the same folks when I go there, perhaps it's the water. I like it down here it down here in London. I enjoy the variety in the mix. I don't miss the religious bigotry that seems to have a grip in the West of Scotland. It's probably always been that way. In fact I remember it well from my youth. Just remember when they ask you 'Whit teem dae ye support?' they are actually asking 'What religion are you?' It's the 21st century, for fuck sake, who gives a shit? It seems odd when you stand outside and have a look in, I don't miss the sort of clique-ism that was there. I like walking down the street and bumping into my black neighbour or stepping aside to let the wee Iraqi woman walk by with her pram when she's got all her gear on. I like the mix. I know folks who go every year to Spain or Greece on holiday and then they turn up in the Scottish pub drinking Irn Bru, Tennants lager, smoking Embassy Regal and reading the Daily Record. Hanging out with other Scottish people. Just a bit more sunshine. There's more to it than that. Still I have a mate on Long Island 25 miles from NYC and at 36 years old he has never been to the city. Now that's fucked up. I have Scottish friends down here, but I also have American friends, Swedish friends, Italian friends, Irish friends, German friends and friends from Yorkshire! I am very happy with my lot."

It seems that all the jobs you've had have come from chance meetings with people. Do you believe in fate?

"I don't generally, but I think there's definitely something to be said for it. I think most of it is being in the right place at the right time. Seizing the moment! You know, if you see that beautiful girl on the tube and you're never going to see her again and you're a single guy or girl, just go over and ask her if she wants to go for pint with you. She can turn round and say 'No, you're a mental case! but if you go away not having done it and think about it and think god, I should have done that, when the opportunity comes, have a go at it seize the moment. Of course, I 'm not for a moment suggesting that anyone should harass young ladies on public transport. The thing was, when I left Rainbow, I had a every Blackmore wannabe call me up and ask me to go and do their albums, but I turned them all down. I did not want to sit in a studio answering that tired old question 'What's he really like then?' I should probably have done at least half of them but I had a bit of a chip at that point, I turned a lot of work down at that time because I wanted to do something completely different from what I'd done with him. That was his style of music I was involved in, I was not going to do it with anyone else. It was a very humbling time for me. But then I realised that I had to put food on the table and ended up doing the Action Man advert! I'm very proud that I could be the voice of Action Man (Laughs)."

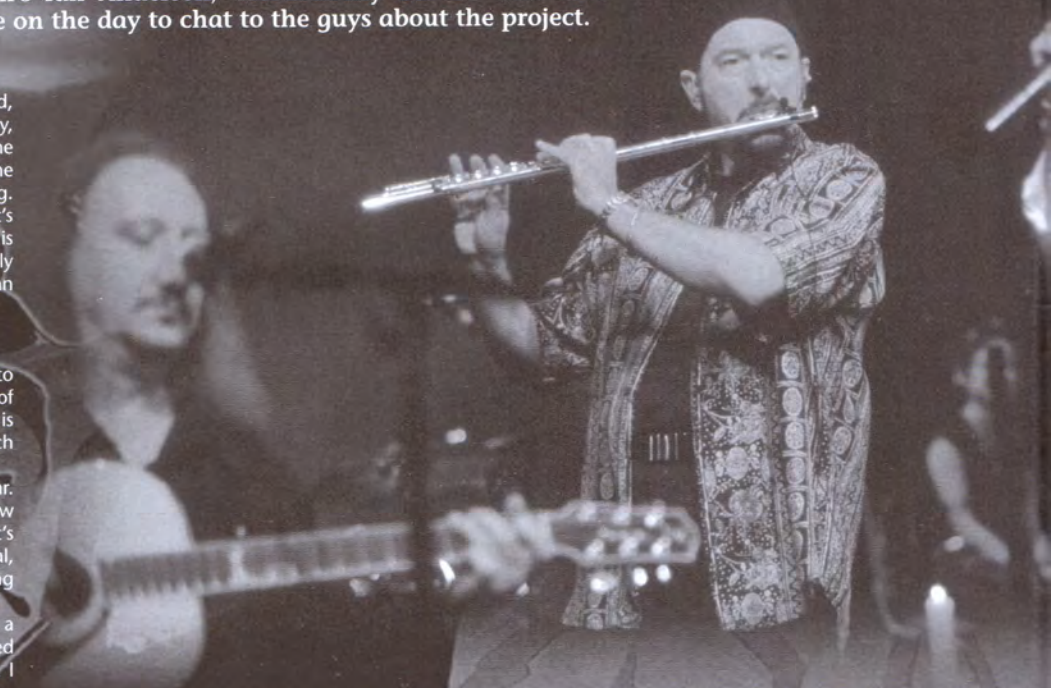
It's not like you've been sitting on your backside, doing nothing though. I mean, you're always auditioning or working on somebody's album or singing on something or another. Did Yngwie not call you after Jorn Lande left?

"I got an email from someone saying that I had been mentioned on his website as a candidate for the gig. I had a chat with his new management. But it would have been wrong to take it any farther as he needed someone who was familiar with the songs and was ready to go in 10 days. The very excellent Mark Boals stepped up put his foot on the monitor and did the tour. I was in America recouperating from surgery on my vocal cords and had done no singing for 5 months. Did you know its possible to rupture a vocal cord? Nasty business but I am singing again, which is great. Its been 7 months now and....well anyway, I met with Yngwie when he was in London, we had a rare old chat, got on well so who knows maybe we'll do something later on. I'm off to Copenhagen in August to sing on the new Cornerstone album 'Human Stain'. Steen and I have been writing it together. It's a very different beast from 'Arrival'. We have a hard-hitting record here. It touches on darker things than is polite to discuss in decent company. It was a challenge to write this record as Steen had done the last one on his own and it's been such a success. We work together well and I'm sure that this next one will surprise a few folks. It's due for release in Jan 2002. The record company spent a lot of time and energy on the first one I hope the work they do is the same for this new one. Then I've started working with an astounding guitar player called Billy Liesegang. An American record label suggested we get together to do a METAL album. So that's on the way too. We have 5 songs recorded, my first venture into a studio since the op. That's an exciting project to be working on. It's certainly the heaviest sounding album I've ever done. Its a funny old game this singing lark. It's feast or famine and at the moment I'm glad that it's feast. I was worried that my singing days were over, so when the surgeon said that I had a 40% chance of full recovery I decided to do as much quality work as I could. I saw him last week and he is pleased with my progress. I don't know who was happiest, him or me. You can check out my website for regular updates and news www.doogiewhite.co.uk."

FIREWORKS

URIAH H

ON MARCH 23RD at the Astoria, London, classic rock legends Uriah Heep recorded a live, acoustic performance. Featuring a spectrum of songs from across their lengthy history and guesting Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson, 'Acoustically Driven' has been called Heep's finest hour. We were there on the day to chat to the guys about the project.



How did this unplugged set come about?

Mick: I think it's something we've always had in mind, but we always wanted to do it in a very particular way, it's a typical Heep thing. We wanted to introduce the string quartet, bring in the steel pedal steel, add the backing singers in and generally embellish everything. Although the working title was 'Unplugged', in fact that's not the real essence of the project, the actual title for it is 'Acoustically Driven'. Although we're playing acoustically based, we definitely wanted to use the hammond organ for instance, which is such a big part of Heep sound.

How do you think the project has gone so far?

Lee: It's going great guns considering we've had to learn 15 songs, from scratch. We've never played a lot of them live before, but we are getting there. Everybody is really getting stuck in and grafting and helping each other... so that's good.

Phil: I'm very pleased with what we've achieved so far. It's quite an ambitious thing for us really, it's a totally new ball game as you know. It's going to be a lot of fun. It's sounding great in rehearsals. This is a dress rehearsal, god knows what is going to happen here. Something interesting I'm sure is going to come out of this...

Trevor: Learning those new songs has been a bit of a challenge. Yesterday was the first day I think I played through the whole set without a chord sheet.... But I think I've finally got the songs in my head.

This isn't the kind of set a Uriah Heep fan would usually hear. How do you feel about this particular set?

Bernie: I think it works really really well. Especially a lot of the early stuff which was very much acoustically based anyway. Even the way they used to promote the band back in the early days was "an evening of Acoustic and Electric Rock", so from the very beginning Heep has always lent itself to that.

On the day before unplugged, are you nervous?

Bernie: I didn't sleep last night, if the truth be known, butterflies the size of mammoths were in my stomach. We've heard all the bits bits and pieces but we haven't had everybody on stage all at once. So today will reveal everything.

Mick: We've rehearsed with the string quartet, we've worked with the backing singers , we've had the pipes in, the percussion and the pedal steel in, but all at separate times. Today is the exciting time, it's the first time we're going to hear the whole lot together. I've got my fingers crossed but I know it's going to be great.

Phil: I've got too much to think about to get really nervous. On this gig I even have to cue and conduct the string quartet, as well as trying to trying to play a bit of piano. So I've got to concentrate on an extra element. It's different for me, a lot of fun though.

Trevor: It's something very different, but it'll be good on the night... I hope !

Lee: I really am nervous. Because there is so much to learn and I don't want to screw up. I've got a lot of vocals to do, but I'm also looking forward to it because I think a lot of people in the industry are going to say, 'Bloody hell! that band's not bad are they! Let's take a look...'

Mick: To be honest, it did have us scratching our heads a little bit at times, getting used to thinking in a different direction. But once we got there and everyone was on board with the idea, it was a great experience.

Trevor: I think it's great to do it unplugged. It's a different way of listening to songs without them being loud and raucous, and you get to hear to the songs better this way.

Phil: I thought it worked as a collection of songs when I very first heard them, going way back to when I had a copy of the proposed set on CD and played it at home in the privacy of my own boudoir and I thought, this sounds interesting, I like it a lot, this has got to be good. Thank God we've got the opportunity to do it.

How do you think the fans will react to the unplugged set?

Bernie: I hope they are as excited as we are. We've had numerous faxes and e-mails of why don't you do this, why don't you do that, why don't you do an acoustic set? We've had it on our minds for a long time, just a matter of timing. I think they'll have a really good time.

Mick: I think the fans will love it. Deep down, you can only go with what your heart feels, and we feel really good about this and we hope that goes over to the fans too. I'm sure they'll love it. If they take it on the same heart as we've got, they'll be smiling as big as we are.

Phil: I think they'll be gobsmacked... one way or another they will be!

Trevor: Yeah, I think they're going to love it. Because the fans that are coming know all the songs anyway, and to hear them being played the way they are going to be played tomorrow night, my guess is that they really will get a buzz from the occasion.

The classic material is shoulder to shoulder with the new material. Do you feel they gel together well?

Trevor: I think they're pretty strong together. If you listen to the older stuff on an album and then the newer stuff, it's like chalk and cheese. But when you actually put it together the way we're playing it now, they slot together really well. You wouldn't know that some of the songs are really old and that a bunch of the songs are really new.

How do you feel about having a musician like Ian Anderson in the line-up?

Mick: It's great having Ian on board because we've got a history with him anyway. Way back when, we did the first satellite link-up from Madison Square Gardens in New York to London with Tull, and we were on tour with them out there. So there's a good history and background there, and I hope this may lead onto other things with Ian, maybe some Jethro Tull and Uriah Heep shows again. Who knows?

Lee: I'm honoured to have him on board. I'm not a musician, I'm just a drummer. You know what they say, three musicians, a singer and a drummer (laughs)

Bernie: I like it. The fact that it's Ian, who cut his teeth back in the seventies as well, as well as playing flute parts on those songs... I think it'll be a laugh. It should be cool... I've never met him either so I'm looking forward to it.

What do you think the strings will bring to the set?

Bernie: Well, they've always been played by Phil on a sampler or a synthesiser. Now he can just concentrate on one instrument, playing it the way it should be, and let the whole strings open up. Yesterday was the first day with the strings and the hair on the back of my neck... boing! Not only because they're cute you understand, but they know how to play. Actually hearing written string parts is refreshing. You've actually got real musicians doing it. It's not just two violins... it's first violin, second viola and then cello.

Trevor: I'm looking forward to hearing it with everybody playing at the same time... but we might all go 'Urghh!'

Did you ever expect to see the Irish pipes in an Uriah Heep line-up?

Mick: Never, never! But it's a welcome thing, it's great. Like I say, it's another dimension. On the songs we're using them, they really do add something special.

Lee: Yeah it was a surprise. When they said pipes, I thought good... Scotland Forever! When I had heard them I realised they were Irish pipes. They really are so neat and they're going to fit some of the tracks on this CD wonderfully well.

There is also a pedal steel in the line up.

Lee: B.J. Cole was the original player on some of the tracks like 'Why Did You Go?', and we thought then if we are going to go that far back and do it properly, let's do

it the whole hog. So we got a pedal steel player who was recommended to us by B.J. Cole, as he is on tour right now. He sounds great. It lifts it up, gives it the attention it deserves.

How do you both feel about performing classic songs as unplugged versions?

Lee: They're ours aren't they? Then they're not really classics! (Laughs)

Trevor: It's great to attempt to do them because they're pretty heavy songs as we perform them on stage. They're usually done pretty loud. So to try to interpret them in a more subtle way is a great experiment.

Lee: We've sometimes done songs like that for a laugh at sound checks before gigs. We've often just sat around and played with an idea, kind of unplugged, just for a good crack. Now we're going to do it positively and record it.

Phil: As this is a totally new project involving a lot of songs that we have had to learn for the event, it's like playing in a different band and doing a different gig. I think the beauty of it is though, all these old songs from the seventies have got a totally different flavour about them, the way they were written, the feeling is totally different and the style of writing is so different to how you would write songs today for example. So it's really good fun... interesting.

Mick: Yeah it's fun, it's also kind of... weird I suppose, to go back and visit all those songs again. But there's a lovely charm about the whole thing. I'm enjoying the experience and it's good to see the other guys getting into the whole deal, and we're treating the seventies side of the set very much as the seventies. We haven't tried to bring it into the year 2000 or update anything. We've been very sympathetic to how they were originally written and performed in the first instance. Yeah, I think it'll be great fun, a great experience.

Which songs from the set do you both particularly like and why?

Bernie: My favourite actually so far is 'Golden Palace'. It's one of the newer songs, but it's one song that I always wanted to do live and we haven't put it in the set, but it's a song that Mick and I have always done at sound check whenever he's been checking the acoustic guitar levels. We've always said that it would sound really good live, and now we have a chance to do it. It's a really neat song.

Lee: I like 'Circus' because it was written in the most unusual circumstances with myself, Mick and Garry Thain, God rest his soul, writing by telephone! It was literally conceived on the telephone. We were communicating by phone... and that's the result's not a bad one either.

Mick: The only problem was that Garry and I were in Los Angeles and Lee was in London. So all our royalties went on the phone bill. It was quite a unique way of writing a song!

Lee: I also like 'Come Back To Me' because it was written about my life and the circumstances surrounding a personal breakup. It was a surprise when I saw it on the set list. I've loved it since it was written. At the time, it was very important to me, it's about the loss of my family, my little boy and my first wife. I thought it was dead and buried. Now it's alive again. We've changed it a little, it's got different harmonies in it with a little twist in the tail. It's just been brought up to date. So I'm happy...I'm very happy.

Trevor: I like 'Cross That Line' from the 'Different World album. It's such a great song, in fact I think it's a brilliant song. We never actually played it on stage and I always wished we did. The guitar solo at the end is tremendous. One of Mick's best guitar solos. I also like 'Different World' from that album - it's a very underrated song. Of the older material, I particularly enjoy 'Why Did You Go?'

Phil: Well, I've got to say this. My favourite, in a very strange masochistic kind of way, is 'Wonderworld'. The reason being that it's the only song I've ever heard which seems to include every chord ever written. The only chord missing from it is B minor. I swear, almost every other chord known to man is in that song.

Bernie: We could sneak it in...

Phil: Without anyone noticing?

Bernie: I could just sing a B minor chord so it didn't feel left out.

Phil: You could? I'd like to hear that!

Bernie: But I'd sing it in D just to put everybody off!

Phil: That would certainly fool everyone...

Which songs work best acoustically?

Mick: Well all of them can be made to work that way, as that's how they were basically written in the first instance, so it's nice to go back to that state again.

Phil: The actual structure of each song is still there, but the feel of the song changes. Normally we're used to playing full gusto on stage. So the contrast is huge, it's a fantastic feeling. It's a totally new experience, each song gets a brand new light.

Lee: As regards the drums, obviously. I'm playing a lot lighter which I've longed to do for a long time. It's got to be more controlled, but they were all written with an acoustic guitar, so we are, in a sense, going back to the roots of the songs.

Trevor: ...Except that having stripped them down, adding the string quartet on the songs is going to transform them, and the steel guitar takes some in another direction still!

Bernie: Yeah, the songs came to life originally around a piano or a guitar. So you're seeing it absolutely stripped down. Then you build it up again, polish and embellish them with other instruments rather with just what we play. The string quartet gives a whole new flavour. Only real strings can do that.

Lee: Uriah Heep has been typecast, but we can be very subtle when the mood takes us. By doing this we can prove to a lot of people that we have more than one quality.

Is it going to be easier on your voice Bernie?

Bernie: No in actual fact. Because a lot of the stuff David did was with almost a very soft, subtle, falsetto, and you want to respect that. We're used to giving it full welly all the time. So it's going to need a lot more control on my voice. I've got a lot of memorising to do. They range from basically 1971 right the way through till 'Golden Palace' which is off 'Sonic Origami'. So it is spanning thirty years. It's a trip through time with Uriah Heep. A lot of songs, we've never played before, I think we've done two of them live in fifteen years. So I'm, using my little grey cells .

Are you enjoying working with such a different set?

Bernie: Yeah... oh yeah for sure. Anything of this kind that stretches the boundaries lets you have a good old shake out of everything and blow the dust off. I like to start a whole new project. The closest we get to a show like this is when, after a show or a concert, you end up at a pub, a club or a restaurant and if there's a band there, we might get up and have a jam. It's that sort of closeness, bare bones, just try it and see. And they're always fun, everyone, all our friends and whoever else is in the dressing room always end up singing.

Phil: Yeah, that's true. Many times we've done a gig on whatever tour, or wherever it is, and after the show we've gone back-stage and had our own little unplugged with an acoustic guitar, and an old out of tune piano, and had a little sing song. So far that's the closest we've come to a proper unplugged...till now.

You've got three extra backing singers. What do you think that's bringing to the sound?

Bernie: I think it's perfect. Especially being female because they've got the higher register which our harmonies are based on. Mixing way up with the cuttle fish, as we like to say, so that's covered. With Lee and Trevor doing the bottom third, and me still in the middle, it's really giving it a complete global effect. It's very very round now.

What is your personal highlight from the project so far?

Phil: Song wise? As I never played all the old Heep stuff before, it's a new thing for that. So most of the songs, if not all of them, have taken on this strange new light for me. I'm interested in all of them, I like them all. I like the way that some of the new Uriah Heep songs have come to life, through the girl singers and the slide guitar and the string quartet. These elements bring the songs to life anyway which have had one dimension, by giving them an extra dimension which becomes something else to listen to. The highlights are also working with the string quartet, definitely, and hearing your music come out from all the arrangements I've written for them. That's exciting.

Mick: No particular highlight. There's a feature with the quartet which is great on 'Golden Palace', and we've got a lovely secret bit we're going to introduce in 'Lady in Black' which is great. The pedal steel is great. So whenever these things come in it just gives it a lift, I haven't really got a favourite yet. I love it all.

Trevor: Yeah...most of them are great. There's one or two which aren't particularly my favourites, I would have picked different songs, but there's always compromise in a band and 90% of them I think are brilliant.

It's nice to hear tracks from Sonic Origami. How important is that album to you as a group?

Mick: I think it's important because it's kept us moving forward. We've always said we're very proud of our history but we always need to keep moving forward in many different ways it keeps things vibrant, the show today, it's vibrant, it's gets us thinking in different directions. If we can keep that going all the time and move forward with new songs, it's going to be great but it's not too far fetched of an idea to say some of these acoustic set songs will make it into the rock set.

Phil, you've had to do a lot more work on this project than usual...

Phil: There are a fair number of arrangements had to be made for the string quartet, the girls, and things like that. If it was only Pip or only myself, we probably wouldn't have had it done in time. So thankfully there was the two of us involved and we got all of the work covered.

What do you think this will do for Heep in the future?

Mick: I think it's opened up avenues we haven't previously explored, and I think we're doing it the right way. It proves once more that there is a lot of depth to Heep music that we're now exploring in a big way. I think it will expand what we do in the future.

Trevor: I actually think this could be a milestone in our career. I'd love to take this out on the road. That would be one of my goals in life. I know it would be expensive, but it would be great... just to sit there and play an acoustic bass all night...bliss.

You've literally got people travelling from all over the world, making a special journey to be at Uriah Heep unplugged. What does that say to you?

Mick: It's wonderful that people make that kind of effort. On the night I think it'll be great. I've got no fears at all. From what we've heard, there's no reason why it shouldn't be fantastic musically...and that's the best reward I can offer.

IAN ANDERSON...

We thought it wouldn't be right to finish without a few words from Jethro Tull's enigmatic frontman, Ian Anderson...

Rather than have to fill the stage, how does it feel to play a less prominent part as a special guest?
Ian: With a Tull show I have both the physical and mental reality of a huge job of concentration. You've got to be in shape, plan your sleeping, plan your travel and be able to come to a peak at 9 o' clock in evening ... or whenever you're supposed to go on. But this is different because I could even risk a bottle of beer or half a pizza before I go on tonight because I only have to play the flute as opposed to singing and doing all the other stuff. So from my point of view, this could be quite addictive. If I get any more offers, I may well consider them.

The rehearsals seemed to flow very smoothly...
Ian: Well... it's about getting used to the sound. I imagine different bands have very different ways of working, in terms of how they like their monitors. In the ear monitors can be very insular in the sense that you are hearing very clearly in your own little world, but you don't get the ambience of what's happening around you on stage. So...given that we're working at fairly quiet levels, I'm just wearing something in one ear and keeping the other ear to hear the sound on stage. Once you get used to it, it's okay.

Do you feel there's a kinship between Uriah Heep's kind of sound and Jethro Tull's kind of sound?
Ian: I think there are a lot of musical similarities in the way things are structured. I recall ... probably a couple of years into our American tour back in '69/'70, the word came from the UK that there was this band called Uriah Heep, apparently working along similar lines to ourselves. It was prophecised that they would give us a run for our money in that musical genre. Although it was some time later that we met Uriah Heep and they toured with Jethro Tull in 1978. We were very much familiar with their name and their parallel progress, although, as is often the case, you never get to see people as you're busy doing your own tours. When you go home, you don't particularly want to drive up to the NEC and watch another rock concert. You tend to say, 'Thanks, that's enough of the music for a little while. We'll have a take-away curry and go to sleep for a couple of weeks'. So I never really caught up with what else was going on. It's only when we played with bands in the context of touring together that I was ever able to see them. It's strange, from almost 30 years of history that your paths never really cross, although you're probably playing at the same venues a week or two apart, year after year you don't actually encounter them.

Are you enjoying the experience of rubbing shoulders with other groups?
Ian: Yeah ... I enjoy doing it. I don't do it very often because, quite frankly, I'm not often asked. I think probably what we do is the sort of music which people are inclined to disbelieve that we can fit in with other people. But most of the guys in Jethro Tull did play from time to time with other folks. And I play on people's albums if they ask me. It's just that I don't like jumping on a plane or going off to a recording studio in London. If somebody sends me a tape, I do it in my own studio and then send it back. If they like it, they can use it, if they don't, they can throw it in the bin!

Is it the kind of thing you might undertake with Jethro Tull at some stage?
Ian: We've been doing the so-called, 'unplugged thing' before the term 'unplugged' was even coined. In fact, Jethro Tull went into the newly constituted MTV in New York City, way back when, and we were one of the first people to go in there. We took a few instruments with us, and without it being announced or discussed, we just started to play within the context of doing an interview. They were wildly impressed with this, thought it was a great idea, and thought they must get some other bands to do the same thing. 'Do come back on our show again,' they said. But of course, we never did get invited back to be formally unplugged on MTV, although I rather suspect that we were the originators of the idea.

Which is a shame, because when you listen to album's like 'Acoustically Driven', you can hear just how wonderful these guys really are. Classic rock history with a certain twist, and one certainly to be savoured and enjoyed.

FIREWORKS

LIVE ON TOUR

VON GROOVE

PLUS

Contagious

Thursday October 11th :The University - Newcastle
[credit card hotline: 01697 746102]
Friday October 12th The Camden Underworld - London
[credit card hotline: 0207 267 3939]
Saturday October 13th Rock City - Nottingham
[credit card hotline: 0115 9412544]
Sunday October 14th The Cavern - Liverpool
[credit card hotlines: 0151 709 4321 or 01695 556302]

LIVE ALBUM TO BE RECORDED AT LIVERPOOL SHOW
TICKETS FOR ALL SHOWS £10 [plus booking fee if applicable]

WWW.ZRECORDS.NET CARGO RECORDS

MJAP IN ASSOCIATION WITH
Z RECORDS PRESENTS

ZROCK 2002

WESTWORLD

TONY HARNELL - VOCALS (TNT)
BRUNO RAVEL - BASS (DANGER DANGER)
MARK REALE - GUITARS (RIOT)
JOHN O'REILLY - DRUMS (RAINBOW, BLUE OYSTER CULT)

Plus Further Acts To Be Added

venue: Ritz, Manchester, England
date : Sunday May 5th 2002
Tickets: £25.00 in advance
Mailorder- Z RECORDS,
PO BOX 58, SKELMERSDALE,
LANCASHIRE, WN8 6FN, ENGLAND
**Cheques Payable to MJAP

or from the following
credit card hotlines:
Tel: 44 (0) 1695 556302
Tel: 44 (0) 151 709 4321

WWW.ZRECORDS.NET CARGO RECORDS

CARGO RECORDS

DEMON

Spaced Out Monkey

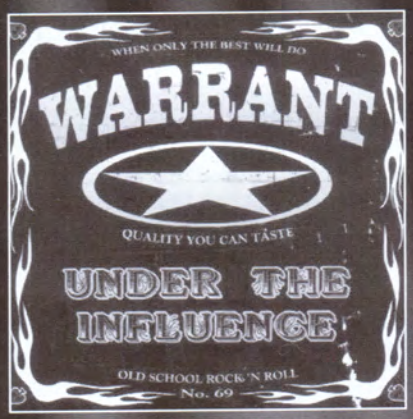
Brand new album from the NWOBHM legends.
Look out for the classic reissues.

SHAKRA

Power Ride

Awesome new Halen-esque release from the Hard Rockers

WARRANT



Under The Influence

Latest release from the Down Boys.
Features nine covers and two brand new songs.
Come On!

CARL DIXON

Into The Future

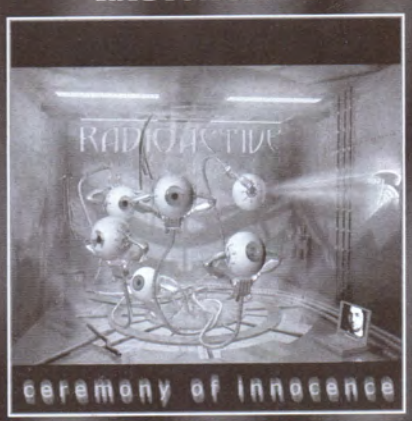
"Into The Future" is the brand new solo album from the former Coney Hatch man.
Look out for reviews.

IRON HORSE

Iron Horse

Keel/Fair Game mainman Ron Keel is back with a brand new album.

RADIOACTIVE



Ceremony Of Innocence

Brand new from Tommy Denander and featuring Jeff, Mike & Steve Porcaro plus Bobby Kimball, Joseph Williams, Fergie Frederiksen and more.

ROB LAMOTHE

Wishing Well Motel

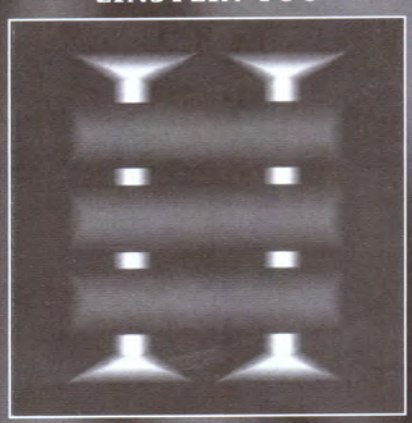
Brand new album from the Riverdogs mainman.
Amazing vocals and immaculate songs

MELODICA

Love Metal

Brand new from Ted Poley and Gerhard Pichler.
Classic AOR meets Danger Danger style Hard Rock.

EINSTEIN TOO



Einstein Too

Incredible new album featuring Jonathan Mover (Satriani/GTR) plus D.C. Cooper (Royal Hunt), Joey Tafolla, Al Pitrelli, Jens Johannsen and Derek Sherinian.

Phone: 0207-731-5125 • Fax: 0207-731-3866
Email: info@cargouk.demon.co.uk

FIRIN' ON ALL SIX!

NEMEL ROCK FESTIVAL

Madrid • Spain
6th-7th April 2001

THE EASTER HOLIDAYS couldn't have been started in a better way. On Friday April 6th, and on Saturday April 7th, for the very first time in Spain we could enjoy a pure dose of melodic rock and AOR over two days It was about time that something like that happened in our country and I want to thank Jose Herrera for the organization of Nemelrock (Necessary Melodic Rock) and to everybody who attended the show for their support.

On Friday, April 6th, as a precursor to the festival and as a party prior to Nemelrock, the Revolver venue opened the doors at 8pm for everyone to get together and for some Spanish bands to entertain us with live music. Ice Blue started their performance about 8.45pm when there was not many people at the venue, unfortunately. This Spanish band from Zaragoza sing in English and have a vocalist who reminds me of Jon Bon Jovi in the 'Blaze of Glory' period, and they put on a great show. Maybe the sound was a bit loud that night but this didn't stop people enjoying the catchy and hard rocking songs of this promising band with a bright future ahead of them. Give them time.

One by one, the bands that would play the next day were arriving at the venue to sign autographs, talk to the fans and the press and to have a good time listening to great melodic rock. Adriangale, House of Shakira, Dare, Elyte and Rafa Martin were there when Nexx started their performance, which consisted of covers and some of their own songs which everybody there loved. Patricia, with her powerful voice as always, and the rest of the group knew how to entertain the audience. All of us jumped and enjoyed, remembering those magic and wonderful 80's with songs by Whitesnake, Europe, Mitch Malloy, Treat and Bon Jovi amongst others. When Nexx played 'Distant Memory' from Harem Scarem's debut, Harry Hess' band was there and they were really surprised at Patricia's vocal quality and the excellent playing by the rest of the band. Nexx's own songs are also really good and I hope they can release an album very soon.

I had a lot of people to talk to: friends from different cities of Spain who travelled to see the show, my colleagues from Fireworks - Phil and Kieran, a lot of people from web pages....that was the reason why after Nexx's performance nobody was rushing to leave the venue. It was very special, the communication between the bands, the press and the fans, these being the three parts so important that any one cannot exist without the others. It was one in the morning before people started to leave, only to come back again next day.

91 SUITE

The day of the festival had arrived. The expectations were very high. The band that opened the festival, 91 SUITE, is going to become one of the most important bands in our country. They are the first group that have signed a contract with a Japanese label (Marquee-Avalon) for 4 records. I am really proud of them because they deserve it. They are really good, the guys are very nice and being so young they have a very bright future in front of them. They are from Murcia and they were the sensation of the festival. With only a demo and with Vinny Records as their European record label they are going to be the talk of the town. Their debut album is about to be released with Mark Mangold himself producing it. Jesús Espin's voice is very similar to Jon Bon Jovi's They played songs of their demo as well as new songs that will be part of their awaited international debut: 'Down to You', 'Hard Rain', 'Lost in the Silence' and many others showed the great quality of the band. With 91 Suite we no longer have to envy any foreign band. Keep an eye of them!

• Eva Montes

ELYTE

For me they can do nothing wrong. In every concert they reach a perfect mutual understanding. They have a lot of experience playing live and you can notice that onstage. They give it all to the audience. With a virtuoso guitarist as great as Pablo, a great singer like Julio, who has an American style but with his own identity and personality, a keyboardist so charismatic as Manu and a rhythm base as co-ordinated as David and Juanma (drummer and bassist respectively), ELYTE is now a solid and established band. We are looking forward to their English version of 'Unno'. They did a splendid show playing most of the songs of their debut: the hard rocker 'Todo mi tiempo', 'Ya lo ves' and 'Solo en la ciudad' (both in the Danger Danger vein), 'No te puedo dejar atrás', the powerful 'Muerte', 'Dentro de mi', my favourite 'Juegos ocultos' (very similar to TEN in the beginning) and 'Bang Bang', the fantastic Danger Danger cover that all the band played brilliantly. The audience wanted more but unfortunately there was no time left.

• Eva Montes

RAFA MARTIN

The Spanish Bryan Adams was next on stage. He picked up his guitar and rocked the world with his songs, helped along by most of the audience. Tracks as great as 'Un lugar cerca del sol', 'Jamás olvidaré', the beautiful ballad 'Todo el amor que te puedo dar' and two of my favourites, 'Semillas de paz' and 'Corazón de Hierro' (all of them from his debut album 'Corazón de Hierro') to continue with a bunch of songs from his second one 'Cuando llegue a volar', playing this song as well as 'El animal' or 'Es la señal'. Many of us were wondering if Harry Hess and Pete Lesperance would come onstage to play some songs with him, considering their collaboration in 'Corazón de Hierro', but unfortunately that didn't happen. Nowadays they are working together again on Rafa Martin's new album. We can predict a huge success for Rafa's next album. Time will give us proof.

• Eva Montes

ADRIANGALE

Following the acoustically driven Rafa Martin, Adriangale grabbed the audience by the scruff of the neck and for the next forty six minutes proceed to deliver one of the most honest and exciting rock and roll performances I have ever had the pleasure of witnessing. Led by the charismatic ex Guardian vocalist Jamie Rowe, their bombastic delivery drove the hordes wild the twin axes of Vic Rivera and Ed Campbell shredding like demons unleashed while the 'borrowed' rhythm section of Radar bassist Scott Novello and drummer Frankie ensured the engine room was firing on all cylinders while Jamie put the icing on the cake, his voice reverberating around the venue as he hit every note and delivered every word as if his life depended on it. The opening salvo of 'Reap What You Sow' and album title track 'Feel the Fire' basically served as a wake up call hitting the audience hard, these two songs being the heaviest on offer so far and were met with a huge roar of approval by the increasingly excited crowd. 'Save Our Love', easily one of the best tracks on the album, kept the tempo moving upward as the commanding figure of Jamie effortlessly cajoled the crowd into singing along with him while to his right, chief axe Vic Rivera cut an animated character striking every pose in the book, hair flying and generally looking cool, especially to the ladies who had obviously taken the diminutive axeman to their collective hearts. Jamie then asked the crowd if anybody remembered his former outfit Guardian before treating long standing fans to 'Turn Around' from 'Fire and Love', unexpected but greatly appreciated.

'Just Let Me Love You', another killer ballad was next on the list, the opening verse sang by Jamie accompanied by the audience clapping along in slow time. How many bands playing their debut gig in Europe can generate such a reaction, and judging by the smiles all round on stage the guys were pretty pleased too!! 'Giving It Up' was the audience participation section, every hand in the place in the air and every voice roaring the chorus back at the band, Ed in particular enjoying it with a big cheesy grin all over his face. Then it was fun and games as Jamie did his best Celine Dion and treated us to the opening lines of 'My Heart Will Go On' from Titanic to more huge roars of

approval before launching into a heavy as hell version of 'Mission Man'. For a finale, label boss John Kivel had a little surprise in store, dragging my fellow Fireworks scribe Phil Ashcroft and our good friend Peter Bietenholz on stage to sing backing vocals to a cover version of Motley Crue's 'Kickstart My Heart'. From my lofty vantage point it was priceless to see Phil, Peter, John Kivel and numerous other fans hanging on a mic stand giving it hockey. Phil was even seen to bang his head and raise his fist in anger...priceless!! From there back into 'Feel the Fire', this time Jamie had the audience singing the entire chorus without prompting and did they or what! One half singing "Ready or not", the other "Can you feel the fire".....fantastic! At the end of the set the crowd went absolutely nuts and the band had every right to feel happy with themselves. They had in that 46 minute period done themselves more favours than any amount of advertising in magazines could ever do for them, and it was no wonder John Kivel had the biggest smile of all as the wily old fox knew it too! The band spent the remainder of the night signing autographs for their new friends and did they enjoy it? You bet! Did they deserve it? You bet!! An awesome performance by anyone's standards and for me the band of the day...by a mile. It really doesn't get much better. Now if only they would play the Gods....Mr Ashton? (Consider it done!! – Ed)

• by Kieran Dargan

DARE

Having been billed as replacements for Millenium, Dare arrived on stage to a somewhat muted crowd. Many of whom had expected a fully plugged in and powered up version, only to be disappointed at the sight of Darren Wharton and guitarist Richard Dews sitting centre stage with a solitary keyboard and acoustic guitar respectively. In fairness to Darren, it was the promoter who neglected to advertise the fact that it would be an unplugged version, and consequently he took the opportunity to explain this to the crowd. For those that have seen Dare in both full electric and acoustic formats, they know it's like chalk and cheese - the electric version being the far, far superior offering and a much better representation of their recorded work, whilst the acoustic version is more suited to a small pub type setting rather than a packed venue of some 600 rabid Spaniards still in a state of euphoria following a blinding set from America's newest hard rock hopefuls Adriangale. Dare played their way through eight songs, all of which were far moodier and broodier than I have heard before, each beginning with a long atmospheric keyboard intro, subtly perforated by Richard Dews stunning guitar. However, try as they might they could never match the attack of the electric bands. Richard Dews is a find indeed, an excellent guitarist who adds lots of feel and colour without attempting to be some sort of axe hero, and is a mighty fine vocalist to boot, complementing, and on occasion outshining Darren.

'Emerald', 'Someday', 'Wings of Fire', 'Chains', 'Lies' and 'King of Spades' all got an airing, and I have to say they were played and delivered efficiently, much to the delight of the staunch Dare fans in attendance. When Darren announced it was time to go and asked the crowd what they wanted to hear, I swear the roars for 'Abandon' could be heard all the way back to North Wales. The boys duly obliged and then finished with a strangely subdued version of 'Whiskey in the Jar'. All in all not a bad performance but to be honest they are at a crossroads - they are either happy to play wine bars for the rest of their careers or they can get out and rock, as we all know they are capable of. The choice is up to them, but if it is the former then ditch the name because acoustic performances like this simply don't do justice to it.

• by Kieran Dargan

HOUSE OF SHAKIRA

After a brief shake-up of the running order which saw the unplugged Dare dropped to third on the bill at the last minute, it was the turn of the sublime Swedes to plug their excellent 'III' album. The strange thing was that even though the energetic and entertaining Adriangale had unexpectedly taken the place by storm, it seemed that House Of Shakira were something of an unknown quantity to the good people of Madrid. Despite having a few years experience and 3 albums under their belts, the initial response was somewhat muted in comparison to all the other acts so far today. This however was about to change!

With a minimum of fuss they strolled onto the stage and kicked into the first of a five-part combination punch from 'III' with the distinctive 'Alien'. The sound was immediately crystal clear with the layered backing vocals ringing out, and Tony Andersson's busy drumming seemingly bouncing off the walls. The unique guitar interplay of Mats Hallstensson and Anders Lundstrom is effortlessly cool without the need for unnecessary histrionics, and the high and clear vocals of Andreas Ecklund are seriously on-the-ball.

I've always thought he had a bit of Steve Perry in his voice, but I've just realised that it's actually closer to Steve Augeri, and yes, he is that good! The band don't do much in the way of posing, except for super-confident bassist Per Schelander who struts around like Nikki Sixx while doing some flawless harmony vocals. In fact, it's their unassuming stage manner that seems to be their only problem. Unlike Jamie Rowe & Co. they don't seem to communicate very well with the audience. I realise that it must feel strange to a bunch of Swedes singing in English to a predominantly Spanish crowd, but Andreas in particular seems a little shy, a fact that didn't go unnoticed judging by the people I spoke to afterwards. Many would later change their minds after witnessing Andreas and a certain Mr. Dargan trying to out-shout each other to W.A.S.P and Helloween in the Excalibur club at 5am, but we'll save that particular blackmail story for another time. 'Alien' soon runs into 'Wings' and then into the wonderful 'In Your Head', all delivered pretty much identically to the album versions. The band later complained that the sound from the monitors was reading at 120 decibels, but from stage-front you would never know that anything was wrong. The band were now in overdrive as more people were falling under the spell of their catchy songs and powerful, punchy delivery.

They continued with the 'III' material through the imaginative 'Black And Blue Skies' and the rousing 'Nearly Orgasmic' before hitting the crowd with a hot quartet from the 'Lint' album. 'Who's Lying Now' and the awesome 'Morning Over Morocco' put the crowd firmly on their side, while the most well known duo of 'Elephant Gun' and 'Method Of Madness' finished them off. The audience were obviously more familiar with the older material and the crowd even managed to sing along with the "Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey" section. The set ends with 'Pellucid (Outro)' from 'III' but by this time they had impressed everyone so much that they wouldn't be allowed to go home just yet. If you were at the Gods in '97 you'll know that they finished their set with 'Separate Ways', but being the unpredictable types that they are, they did 'Stone In Love' this time. It was note perfect too! Much singing and waving of arms followed, proving that music is indeed a universal language.

• Phil Ashcroft

HAREM SCAREM

The whole point of this trip for most of the foreigners present was the opportunity to see Rubber reverting back to Harem Scarem for a one-off dip into the back catalogue before the Rubber material edges all the old classics out of the set for good. That was the initial idea anyway, but in the interim between Kieran and I booking the trip and the actual event it came to light that the band had done an about turn concerning which direction they should take next. Armed with the privileged information that they were about to return to their melodic rock roots and sign a deal with Now & Then, I was told to tell no-one. I kept my promise, but everyone in Madrid already knew anyway! Having narrowly missed them by days on previous visits to their home town of Toronto, I wasn't going to miss a single second of them this time, so I decided to forego all the raised vantage points and wriggle my way to a spot in front of Pete Lesperance.

Opening with 'Hard To Love' it's obvious that the band are an accomplished live act (hence the 23 Japanese live albums). The first thing you notice is the power of Harry Hess' voice. There's much more aggression in there than I expected, but without any loss of melody. Besides belting out the vocals, Harry plays rhythm guitar throughout most of the set and bursts into big cheesy grins between his vocal lines. Pete Lesperance makes the guitarwork look effortless, and his big muscular tattooed arms are completely at odds with the finesse of his playing. Barry Donaghy stalks around like Jason Newsted, and ex-Honeymoon Suite drummer Creighton Doane is all over his kit in the way that only Canadian drummers know how. After the initial burst of euphoria it became obvious that the audience weren't familiar with, or maybe just didn't like the newer songs. 'Stuck With You' from 'Rubber', 'Turn Around' from 'Big Bang Theory' and an 'Ultra-Feel' duo were greeted with polite indifference despite the excellent vocal on 'Happiness' from Pete, and his great solo on 'Over The Edge'. In fact I'm sure I could hear some dissent from the back of the hall, but maybe that was just Kieran!

As if sensing that it was time to get the crowd back on their side they brought on Patricia, from the excellent Nexx who had played the previous night, to sing 'Sentimental BLVD' with them. Despite speaking very little English and having the lyrics written down on paper she performed very well with only a couple of very minor mistakes. What a voice!

Time to tease the crowd a bit with the intro to 'With A Little Love' until Harry says he can't remember the words, before launching into another Rubber double (try saying that when you're drunk!) of 'Sunshine' and 'It's Gotta Be'. As well as the guys play it was obvious that Rubber wasn't what was required, but it has to be said that Barry in particular looks more comfortable with the newer material and was far more animated when playing it. Pete wins the crowd back again with a short but mind-blowing solo, then Harry and Pete do versions of 'Honestly' and 'Slowly Slipping Away' without the rhythm section.

'Draggin' Me Down' from the Japanese version of 'Ultra-feel' is followed by another new one in the form of 'In The End', then a truly monstrous version of 'No Justice' gets the blood pumping again. This is where the band are simply untouchable, and if they had any doubts about their imminent change of direction then the crowd's reaction to this one would have been proof enough. At the end of the song Harry says "Didn't think we could still do it, huh?" but it was never a question of ability was it Harry?

After 'Headache' from the 'Rubber' record he says "We have to do some new stuff", why Harry? We won't tell anyone if you won't! The Squeeze cover, 'Another Nail In My Heart' is followed by the intro to 'Jealousy' which is again cut short with the words "Well Pedro, what else can we tease them with that we aren't going to play?". I know they're only having a laugh but an English speaking crowd wouldn't have taken it that way, and neither did Kieran.

'Who Buddy' from 'Rubber' shows what an incredible drummer Creighton Doane really is, and the set proper finishes with an absolutely brutal version of 'Change Comes Around', and I mean that in the nicest possible way. They can't go without the uplifting 'Saviours Never Cry', with Pete whipping up a storm before Harry surprised no-one by announcing they were going to make a new rock record. The excellent 'So Blind' closed proceedings but the band obviously included the 'Big Bang Theory' songs in the 60% 'classic' Harem Scarem material they were contracted to play, and not the prelude to Rubber that the album obviously was. They're still awesome live performers but I think the set-list disappointed more people than it thrilled.

So there you go! All things considered it was a very enjoyable weekend, and even though the organisers didn't make a profit, most people went away happy. On behalf of the crowd, especially us foreigners, a big thank you is owed to Jose Herrera and Necessary Productions for staging the event, the bands, and the wonderful AOR fans of Spain. We made many new friends and look forward to rocking in Madrid again soon.

• Phil Ashcroft

VON GROOVE

Z-Rock 2001 • Manchester Ritz
6th May 2001

Words: Rob Evans
Pix: Jeff price

WILL YOU please welcome on their U.K debut, Von Groove!', were the words that an awful lot of people have waited a long while to hear. Tonight they finally got too see the band that have created huge waves ever since their monumental debut all those years ago. They got a small taste at last years Z show when Mladen played with 24K but tonight they got the real deal in all their technicolour beauty. Their latest album 'Seventh Day' on Z Records is in my opinion their best since the debut and has managed to capture both the melody and agression that this band have become synonomous with all these years. With the loss of Mathew Gerrard earlier in the year most bands would have crumbled, but not this lot, they've just returned stronger and better than ever. As I said earlier in my introduction due to the loss of Shy most bands gained extra set time with Von Groove being one of the main benefactors of this extra time and that, in my book, is no bad thing!

For the next hour and a half this band went from the things of legend to fully fledged rock gods of the highest order and then some. This whole Z Rock belonged to Von Groove they took it by the scruff of the neck and shook some life into it. As well as that all important X factor, showmanship, of which they had plenty. This band also had some of the best songs that you will ever hear, I mean how many bands could leave 'Two Nights In Tokyo' one of their best songs out of the set and still get away with it like this lot did, not many and that's for sure.

After an atmospheric intro they opened their set with 'Guns over London' from their new CD a great start for sure and just the tip of the iceberg as far as this show was concerned. Mladen looking as enigmatic as ever never failed to deliver the goods all evening with 'Chameleon' being both a fitting testament to him as a guitarist as well as Von Groove as a live band. If Mladen is an enigma then Shotton is nothing short of amazing, he covered every inch of this stage tonight and was loving every minute of it. He was an entertainer of the highest order, directing video cameras onto the crowd and throwing water into the front rows and all the while he looked fully pleased to be here.

'It Should Have Been Me', 'Seventh Day', 'Oxygen' and 'Rainmaker' all flew past too quickly as this band started to hit a real groove. On 'Driving Off The Edge Of The World', Mike Shotton went into the crowd and got one lucky punter to accompany him on the chorus and then it was time for one of the songs that we've all waited over a decade to hear live, an extended version of 'Once Is Not Enough'. This crowd pleaser was the final song of an excellent set.

For the first encore they gave us 'House Of Dreams', another slab of classic melodic rock, delivered with style, panache and verve. Von Groove at their finest, song of the day and no mistake. They left the stage only to return for a short acoustic workout before launching straight into 'Kashmir' with Shotton declaring 'This ain't no Puff Daddy', before climbing to the top of the speakers to deliver this classic British rock anthem. They finally left the stage to thunderous applause and rightly so as this was one of the best bands that I've seen in a long while. It's rumoured that they will tour the U.K at the end of the year and that they will also play next year's Z Rock. Let's hope so as on this form they're pretty much unmissable. Momentous!

FIREWORKS

RPM
presents

Matthew & Gunnar

NELSON

Live and Acoustic in the UK

With very special guests

Mitch Malloy

Deadline

Oct 20th: The Boardwalk, Sheffield (0114-279-9090)
Oct 21st: Bierkeller, Bristol (0117-926-8514)
Oct 23rd: The Underworld, Camden (0207-482-1932)
Oct 24th: The Limelight Club, Crewe (01270-251929)
Oct 26th: University, Newcastle (016977-46102)

All tickets £12

Available from the following outlets:

RPM: (01484-643992 or 07780-618381/618262)
Destiny Records: (01489-603549)
The Groove Machine: (016977-46102)
Loud 1: (01782-522370)

(And all venues and usual agents - subject to booking fee)

Check out: www.rpm-2001.com
E-mail: sales@rpm-2001.com

RPM

NEW MAIL ORDER CD CATALOGUE

BRINGING YOU THE BEST IN NEW AND USED AOR/MELODIC ROCK MUSIC!

BANDS SUCH AS

HARDLINE • POISON
MOTLEY CRUE • TUFF
NELSON • FIREHOUSE
DANGER DANGER
WARRANT

AND MANY MORE!!!!!

ALSO FEATURES NEWS, REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS!

FOR THE LATEST CATALOGUE AND MONTHLY UPDATES PLEASE SEND YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS AND EMAIL ADDRESS TO:

RPM, 2A SPARK STREET,
LONGWOOD, HUDDERSFIELD
HD3 4XB, ENGLAND

EMAIL: SALES@RPM-2001.COM
WEBSITE: WWW.RPM-2001.COM
TELEPHONE: 01484 643392

38 SPECIAL

Don Barnes talks to Kieran Dargan

So Don, what's it like to be still around the place celebrating 25 years together as 38 Special?

"Well the one thing that we've learned is that your fans grow up with you over the years and that's nice. We toured hard over the years and worked hard on building up a fan base so I guess we must have been doing something right."

The first time I remember hearing 38S was the 'Wild Eyed Southern Boys'.

"Well that was our fourth album. We had the first two which failed miserably. With 'Rocking Into the Night' we opened the door a little before 'Wild Eyed Southern Boys' opened it wide.....big time."

Back in the day when Southern rock was suddenly very hip in the pages of many of the UK rock mags, you were lumped in with the southern cross, flag waving gator country bands such as Molly Hatchet, Skynyrd et al. Personally I thought there was a lot more to the 38 Special sound than that.

"We felt at the time it had been done by the best. Skynyrd were busy inventing the cliché that became 'Southern Rock' and the one thing we learned from our mentors, Skynyrd, was not to clone anybody. Try find your own influences and paint the canvas yourself. We were all big Beatles fans as well as Skynyrd, the Cars etc, so were were influenced by a lot of different bands. One thing that became big was the eight note thing; we very soon discovered that if we used these eight notes and a good melody, we had something so I guess that defined the 'sound' of 38 Special. I guess the perfect combination of muscle and melody.....the guys used to come to the shows for the guitar and the hot licks, while the girls liked the passionate lyrics...maybe for the hot licks too...ha ha ha!!"

A lot of people describe 38 Special as a good time rock and roll band but from what you're saying there was a lot more to your lyrics?

"Well we did, our live show has always been our forte, we always go after the crowd. We learned from an early age that even if we had three bands above us on the bill, God help 'em because we were going to blister the audience and we always play with heart and conviction. We still do to this day, but although we rock out our lyrics have a heartfelt truth because everything we write is based on personal experience."

Everybody knows that Donnie is a brother of the legendary Ronnie Van Zandt of Lynyrd Skynyrd. Have you or Donnie ever felt added pressure because of this relationship, and of course the huge legacy Ronnie left behind?

"We were very close. They rehearsed in the very next building to us. We used to go watch them and when we went back to our studio we'd go, 'How did they do that?'...Ha ha ha!! As far as Donnie feeling pressure, yes I think he did, especially in the beginning when he used to sing all the songs. In fact it was he who suggested that I sing some just to change things a bit. He had more of an earthier voice while I had the more radio friendly pop voice. Donnie and I have been together since I was twelve years old, so it doesn't matter who carries the ball as long as the team wins. At the time of Skynyrd's accident it had a profound effect on us.....we could either let it drag us down or take inspiration and strength from it and we decided on the latter. In fact Ronnie once signed on a loan for an amp for me, nineteen years old married with a kid, I had terrible gear. I met Ronnie in a music store and he was my saviour by co-signing that loan for me. Donnie told me years later that Ronnie told him 'Stick with that Don Barnes guy, he wants it bad.' In fact I flew out to the Skynyrd crash site with his father, had to make funeral arrangements and various other things. It was a very traumatic time and something I will never forget. I stood over Ronnie's body, a man that had helped me so much and I swore to myself that I would make it in honour of him."

I wasn't aware you went to the crash site.

"Donnie couldn't make it, he stayed with his mom. I was kind of an extended member of the family so I helped out. Lacy, Ronnie's dad, was in denial on the way out; his son wasn't gone, it was a big mistake. I went round the hospital to see the other guys in traction and of course the first thing we did when we landed was go to the funeral home and at that stage it really came home to us that some of the guys were gone."

Is what happened something you have ever though of putting to music, perhaps how it changed your life?

"You know, that's a great idea. I never thought about that. It would be good to write a song dealing with the strength of this man who is now 86 years old. He visited every member of the band in hospital, and when they all asked how Ronnie was doing he would put on a brave face and tell them all to stop worrying and get themselves well, all this despite his own loss...amazing."

Going back to the original 38 Special line up, it was a six

piece but you have lost a few along the way: Steve Brookins, Jeff Carlisi and Jack Grondin.

"Over the years guys get fatigued. You spend nine months on the road and then as soon as you get off you have to start recording a new album. You have no personal life as such. I left the band for four and a half years because I was tired of it all. It's a vicious cycle - you record it and then it's tour again. For years I had nobody to come home to. It's great having all the money and success but if you have nobody to share it with then it doesn't really matter. Jack is actually a minister now and he was the wildest one of us all. Steve runs a trucking company and provides transport for us when we're on tour. Jeff used to work for a NASCAR custom painting company; they used to paint NASCAR cars and have the original drivers sign them and then sell them as replicas to fans."

Have you any regrets?

"Hell no! I know people who have terrible jobs that get them down all the time, and I can go crank up a guitar and pretend to be nineteen years old again, so I have no complaints at all. Sure, living out of a suitcase with a twenty person entourage isn't the ideal situation , but I wouldn't change it."

The sacrifice brought on the hit singles.

"Yes, to a certain extent. 'Hold On Loosely' was written with Jim Peterik from Survivor about my divorce - I guess everything has it's price."

You were pretty lucky to have Jim as a song writing partner over the years.

"Oh yeah, Jim's great. He's incredibly talented. He had a hit single when he was seventeen years old with Ides of March. He's a song-smith because he has a passion for writing. Sometimes his wife gets mad at him....they would be out in a restaurant for a meal when all of a sudden he's off scribbling down ideas....man he's obsessed."

How does the creation process come together within 38 Special?

"It's a little bit of everything really, a riff here, a melody there. We all get together and work on stuff. Somebody will come in with a bit and say that's what I'm working on. It's an insecure thing because you are looking for everybody else's approval, and sometimes it doesn't happen, but all it takes is one other person to like your piece and then you feel vindicated and that's always great, especially when you present it to Jim Peterik and he goes 'Great...we can do this here, and that there', you suddenly realise you are valid after all....ha ha ha!!"

So to bring us up to date, I notice on the Sturgis CD that you have a new track on there. How is the material taking shape?

"Well, seeing as Sanctuary bought up CMC they have the option on the new record and they are looking for a really big rock record, and that's fine by us. We did a little experimentation with 'Resolution' with acoustics but this time they want really edgy guitar. They want to make inroads into radio. Radio is so fractured into different formats: classic rock, hard rock, pop, that it's hard. We have been lucky enough to become an established act so it's a little easier to get airplay, but as always with new songs it's hard to get them on rotation. CMC wants a big rocker, so we'll give it to them."

Are you under pressure from Sanctuary to deliver the finished album by a certain date?

"Not right now, although Donnie and Ronnie have a new record out right now and it's doing well. We don't want to say there are conflicting schedules but obviously Donnie can't be in two places at once. We'll wait for that to take it's course and then we'll get to work. We're very proud of them, they have always wanted to do a record like this and they have ...great. We have about half the new 38 Special record done right now, so maybe in the fall sometime."

But definately a rock record?

"Yep. The last one was our 'Rubber Soul'. We tried new and different things, there was a song about spousal abuse called 'Shelter Me'. We're all getting a little older but the new one will be about cars and girls....whaaaaayyyy!!!"

How has Sturgis done since release?

"It's done real well, the CD is doing real well and the DVD is selling really well also. You know that was a good show. It was really cold that night with a big wind and for a while it looked like it wasn't going to come off but thankfully the weather got kinder and we were able to do the show. Just as well because we didn't have the luxury of recording a few shows, it was just the one, so I guess we got lucky. It was real fun shooting the concert - the video crew had never done a concert before, lots of football and baseball but no gigs....maaaaann did I sweat. I had to go up to Providence, Rhode Island for a meeting and kind of explain to them 'Just be a guy in the audience with a camera, shoot it as if you were taking photos', but it turned out great. I did think it was too long though at one hour and forty five...but hey."

Will the studio track 'Just One Girl' be appearing on the new record?

"No, that was just for the Sturgis CD. We realise that we have to get away from the pop stuff and back to rocking ways...so all new material."

I don't suppose you have the phone number for the girl on the cover....great bike!

"Ha ha ha ha...do you know who she is? She's Sebastian Bach's wife! Isn't that tough? Jeez, how did he end up with her? Phew man!!!"

Lots of people say 'Thank God Max Carl is gone, he did serious damage.'

"Well that's a shame. He's a real good singer but he just wasn't right for them. I have a lot of respect for him but they kind of sounded the death knell there when they took him out. He didn't even try to make the old songs sound like they should...just didn't work."

Something you have always done was toured, toured and toured. However it's been years since you have been to Europe

"We've got new management, Vector, and they're really keen to get us over at the end of the year. They want to get Skynyrd over too and maybe even a two band package, so that would be a cool concert for the fans. We definitely have overlooked Europe over the years and we want to put that right."

So for the record, how many albums have 38 Special sold to date?

"It would be in the region of thirteen million - we're the hometown boys made good. My son, who's grown up now, remembers our house with the walls separating from the floor and the rats popping up...man it was poverty but they are the sacrifices you have to make I guess."

All things come to those who wait?

"Eventually...eventually."

Looking back on everything is there anything you would change?

"Well, I would have liked to have started when we were a little older. We were young and green and although we thought we were ready, there was a lot of heartache and disappointment along the way that could have been avoided if we were older."

So what does the future hold for 38 Special? Another 25 years?

"Well we can tour as long as we want to. We are at the stage where we are turning down shows, city festivals and the like, but we would like to do more movie soundtracks - they are fun, and with our new management do bigger and better things....and of course get back to Europe."

TERRY BROCK

In Conversation with Sue Ashcroft...

SINCE HIS not-so-humble beginnings on the Kansas album 'Drastic Measures', and a very successful career with Scottish rockers Strangeways, Terry Brock has become the favourite vocalist of a great many people. His new album Back to Eden has been well received so far, so I thought I needed to find out more about what makes Big Tel tick! (Please excuse if there are a few words you don't understand as he slips all too easily into a Scottish accent!)

You've produced 'Back to Eden' yourself. In the past you've worked with some pretty famous producers. What made you decide to do this one yourself with Teddy (Cook)?

"We hadn't any money! No, well that was actually part of it because you know the budgets are so much smaller now. But also it was because I figured after 20 years of doing this and watching other people produce, I just hoped that I had learned enough about the production side. Teddy knew enough about the engineering side, the technical, computer side of things that I figured I could do it myself. I really wanted once, just to do something the way I wanted to hear it and the way I wanted to do it. You know, I think it came out exactly right. I would have loved to have had maybe a bit more money so that some of the technical difficulties we incurred wouldn't have happened, but for the amount of time we spent on it and the amount of money we had, we're really happy with it. (In Scottish accent) Do you like 'Coming Home' there hen?"

Yes!

"Yeah, that was written for my Scots, for my pals."

Is that the only connections you have with Scotland - through the Strangeways guys, because it was a really heartfelt song, I really love it.

"You know what happened with that? When I met you and I met the Scots contingent as we called them, at the Gods last year- well, I wasn't really positive about how I was going to be perceived by the Scots because I was the American guy in the band- with their boys. So, I was hoping I would be perceived well, but I wasn't sure. They could have been going 'There's that Yank that destroyed the band. If they'd had a Scottish singer, who knows.' I didn't know for sure. So I was always a bit wary about how I was going to be perceived. And then to have people drive down 7 or 8 hours just to see me. They came down, they wanted to wave the flag, and to have people treat me so nice 'When are you going to play in Glasgow?', 'Come and stay at my house', and I felt just such genuine support from every Scots person I met at the Gods, people on the train, you know. One guy's going 'You're a legend in Glasgow' and all this stuff, it really affected me. I'd had this melody floating around in my head for years. I guess maybe I was up in the Heilans [Highlands] with the boys one time or something when they had shown me some place up around Fife and I just had this little melody (hums a bit of the song). I had it literally for about 12 or 13 years. I kept trying to write a song and nothing lyrically or chorus-wise could ever measure up to that melody. And then finally this past Christmas, after I went to the Gods, thought about it some more, all of a sudden BOOM! It all happened and I just had this vision of this Scots warrior going away to fight and never coming back, and his wife (kind of like a ghost story) standing up on the mountain in the heather just waiting for him to come back. Then one day while we were doing it there was a guy locally who was playing in an Irish folk band, and he was playing an Irish flute. I went ok, there's one thing right there that I need so I got him to come over and play in the middle of the song. Then at the end I thought I've got to find a bagpipe band- I've gotta do it! So, I searched on the in
ternet. I searched and I searched and I searched and I finally found a bagpipe band down in Dunedin, Florida. Of course they would be from Dunedin, wouldn't they? They came down, they came in with the kilts and the full bit and played at the end. I got chills! If I could take them on tour with me and have them play it every night I would. I'll guarantee you this- if I play a show in Glasgow or Edinburgh or any of these Scots shows, somebody's gonna be out there blowin' the pipes at the end there hen! (..as he slips back into the Scottish accent!). If not I'm going to learn them myself!"

Well, you've done us proud because it's a fantastic song.

"Thank you, it's my favourite song on the record. I've been doing all these interviews. Like, Monday I did a boatload of interviews with Italian TV and radio stations and they all asked me what my favourite song was and I always tell them 'Coming Home'. That's why I ended the album with it, because it's like- the circle is complete now. I'm sort of back to the Strangeways type feel and that song just put the cap on all of that."

I was just going to ask if that was one of the reasons you called the album 'Back to Eden'? Was it just because of the song, or was it because you feel that you've come back to the sound that you're most comfortable with?

"That's exactly it. Actually 'Back to Eden' was brought to me, just the title and the idea, by Jim Peterik. I went to Chicago to write and I rang him up, because we'd always wanted to work together on something. I said 'I've got this solo deal and I'm going to be in Chicago' and he said 'Great, come out to the house and we'll write a couple of songs.' So there was about a week in between and when I got there he said 'I've been thinking about this journey you've taken through all this different stuff. You know you're really coming back to the style of music and the type of music that's comfortable for you...that you enjoy.' So, he said 'How 'bout 'Back to Eden', I've got this idea for a song.' So, I just immediately thought that had to be the title for the album. It really represents just a return to the style of music that I know how to do best, that I enjoy the best, and am comfortable doing."

It's very much the Strangeways album that never was. Why has it taken you so long to do it and why have you decided to do it without them? Is that something to do with the direction that they went in that you weren't happy with, or what?

"You know when I left, I left for a bunch of reasons. None of them really at the time were musical, just because I was a bit homesick. RCA in America had really dropped the ball, and business things had headed in a very bad direction for us. I was very much afraid and I really wanted to concentrate on America at that time and it just wasn't going to happen in that particular situation. Also, I was becoming less and less involved musically with the band, really pulling away. I could feel that they were going to go in the direction that they went in which was more sort of spacey, kind of Pink Floydy kind of direction and I wanted to continue on the way we'd started, grow in some ways, but not take a complete left turn. Half way through the recording process Teddy looked at me...he wasn't familiar with Strangeways but I had played him some stuff ('Love Lies Dying' is now one of his all time favourite songs, he loves playing it live) and he said 'This is the Strangeways album they didn't make'."

That's exactly what I thought as soon as I heard it.

"Yeah, it was just a continuation along the lines of where we would have been going. Especially songs like 'Another Chance' that could have been right off of the second album, and 'Coming Home' is just like a natural follow up to 'After the Hurt has Gone' and Teddy said this was the Strangeways album that they should have made. I'm really thankful and I'm glad that it turned out that way. That's what most of the people that have become fans of mine, that's what they enjoy from me and that's what they expect from me. So I'm really happy that it went in that direction and I had a lot of fun doing it, and I hope to continue."

You've collaborated with Teddy Cook on this and used the other guys from The Sign for the most part, tell me about the other musicians on the album.

"What I wanted to try to do with this was involve friends of mine that had been supportive and around for the past 15-20 years. Everything I've done they've always been around to help me out. I wanted to try and kind of pay them back in some way 'cause some of them don't have that many album credits. I knew I was going to use Andy (Bigan) on drums and he is still the live drummer with The Sign. He's playing in Belgium with us this week. He's really my best friend and been my drummer in all my projects on and off (outside of Strangeways). Teddy of course, I mean I didn't even know he played anything other than bass until I got down there and found out that he's an incredible guitar player, incredible bass player, incredible keyboard player, incredible drummer and great singer. So he pisses me well and truly off! Outside of those two guys I brought in another friend of mine, Lee Day on guitars and he was the other guitar player in my first club band in Atlanta. We've remained really good friends and I wanted to bring him down and involve him. Give him a shot at playing some stuff. We had a blast. And Frank Fogerty is the keyboard player. He was my songwriting partner in Nashville and he co-wrote a lot of the songs with me and helped me polish up the lyrics and played amazing keyboards and some great B3 organ and stuff, so those were the main musicians that I used. I got Mark, of course playing on the song he and I co-wrote 'Up All Night' which was supposed to be a real Michael Bolton 'Fools Game' but heavier type track which is what it turned out to be. There were bits and pieces like Randy Jackson played slide on the Japanese bonus track 'Hot on the Bayou', and other than that, the band are musicians that were just old friends who were just having a laugh."

We've been in contact with a guy called Don Wishon for a while now. He says you've been doing some acoustic shows with Randy?

"Yeah, I have. Actually this Sunday night in Dallas we're doing an acoustic show together. I'm opening for Randy. I'm going to Houston on Saturday. I'm doing a little US promotional tour to try to raise the profile a bit over here in America because my success has been almost totally European, UK and on the continent and stuff so there are some fans over here, I've just gotta get out there and find them! SO I'm going to Houston, Dallas, New Orleans, Nashville and Chicago on this little run doing acoustic shows and CD release parties in smaller venues. Then I'm going to do another run where I go to Atlanta, New York City, Panama City Beach down in Florida and Sarasota where we recorded the album. So, just doing bits and pieces, trying to help out over here in America and hopefully with Mark Ashton and everybody's help there could be a UK and European tour happening in the fall. We're trying to put that together right now. It looks like it's going to happen, we just don't know what form that's going to take yet."

There are a couple of songs on the album that you sound very much like Steve Perry on. Was he a big influence on your singing style?

"You know, he was in the early days and in the club band we did a lot of Journey songs and of course me having that same kind of high tenor voice that he has, he became an influence, but as much as he was, so was Paul Rodgers. So was Lou Gramm, so was Marvin Gaye, so was Otis Redding. There were a bunch of people in there it's just that this type of music, when you get up in that register...it's pretty much Steve Perry/Lou Gramm that are a benchmark, and even Steve Walsh from Kansas. So, I ended up leaning in the Steve Perry direction, especially on the first Strangeways album. I was really more so in that bag then, but I heard it so much it became like I wasn't even identifiable. It was 'The Steve Perry soundalike, Terry Brock', 'The Steve Pery clone' and after that for a while I started to reach a bit on the 'Walk In The Fire' record and on this one on songs like 'Light of the Moon' where I do a little bit bluesier style, more in the Paul Rodgers kind of vein."

That's actually my favourite track on the album.

"That's also Randy Jackson's favourite song on the album. He's forcing me to let that be the song we're playing in Belgium because he wants to play that song live so much."

CK

It's a sexy, sleazy song.

"That's what Randy said! Every woman he's played it to they've said 'That's' REALLY sexy!' And I went 'Ooh!' That's not bad ctually,hearing that. Basically it's a song about obsession. It's like this lurking kind of obsession with somebody. It can be anybody at any time. I had this little riff at the beginning and I thought that sounds really spooky...and sort of dangerous. I went in that direction and just imagined the whole deal of the obsession thing. Songs like that are just to show people that yes, Steve Perry was an influence, and yeah I love that kind of stuff, but there's also the other side and altogether that sort of makes me...Big Tel!"

I really enjoyed at the beginning of the album 'Audio Life Dream'. Is that supposed to be like a musical equivalent of your life flashing before your eyes?

"That's exactly what it was. That actually was a dream I had one time not too long ago. Walking through this sort of dream landscape and for some reason the records I'd sung on were flying past me. I'm dodging them and then here comes the Valentine record and everything else...it was bizarre. But then I thought, well what a unique way to give sort of a retrospective of what's led up to this point."

To try to introduce people to what you did then and where you are now?

"Exactly, I felt it was a good bridge between the past and now the present. For people who didn't really know what I'd done in the past it would be a little snapshot for them as to what I'd done in the past, and people that did know, it would be kind of a nod and a wink to them. Like we're in on this little secret together."

You've got Joe Lynn Turner working with you on the album. I read an interview with him in which he said that you had been rehearsing with Deep Purple in the '80's. What happened there?

"Oh yeah! You know, I really don't know what happened. Ritchie and I just kind of didn't see eye to eye and at the time he pretty much seemed to control the strings. I think the band wanted to go in a bit of a new direction but at the same time they wanted to play it safe. With Joe and Ritchie being together for so many years in Rainbow, they just felt more comfortable with him at the time than going 'Here's ANOTHER brand new lead singer' for Deep Purple. Then subsequently they ended up giving him the elbow and getting Ian Gillan back. Now of course Steve Morse is playing with them, so it's just a bizarre circle. But yeah, Joe's a good friend of mine and Bob Hill, who produces Joe's records also co-wrote the lyrics with me on 'Native Sons' after I had told him the whole Strangeways story."

How was it working with Billy Greer again?

"He's like my big brother and he has been for 20 years. I've known him since before he was in Streets and before he was in Kansas. I got him involved in The Sign project as much as by saying "if you'll do this with us, I'll see if I can get Serafino and Mark and all the guys at N&T/Frontiers to be made aware of the fact that you're a great singer and songwriter and that you need to have a solo deal." So, when that worked out, in Seventh Key then he roped me into doing all the backing vocals on that. I said "well, if I do that, then you've got to drive down to Sarasota and play bass and sing some. We're always helping each other out in any way we can and like I said he's my big brother and that'll continue. So, we just had such a laugh. Neither one of us take ourselves seriously at all so we spend most of our time making fun of ourselves while we're playing. I'm really proud of him too. That Seventh Key record is amazing."

Yeah, it's excellent. Now, a couple of weeks ago I watched on TV 'National Lampoons European Vacation.' I love the song 'Holiday Road', but at the end there was a great song called 'Back in America'. So, I'm on the internet on the All Movie Guide trying to find out about this song. I recognized the vocalist, but of course the last place I thought of to look was on your website! It was you of course wasn't it? That was with Network. How did the song end up being used for the film?

"What happened was, at the time I was down in Louisiana working with Jim Odom and David Peters who had been in this band called Le Roux, who had the same manager as Kansas. So, when the Kansas tours that I did finished, the manager sent me down to Louisiana to write songs with Jim and work on this project that he was putting together. One of the things that we did during that time was Phil Ehart (the drummer) from Kansas had a side project called The Inside Track where he played songs for movies. He had The Doobie Brothers and Cheap Trick and Jefferson Starship and Kansas and all this stuff and he just asked if we would like to be involved and try and see if we could get some songs in some movies. We thought we would give it a shot, not thinking, what would you do if you had the track by these two unknown guys or a Doobie Brothers song? We didn't really think we had a shot at any of it and then the European Vacation thing kept coming back to our song and so we ended up getting to record it for the movie."

It was a perfect song for the end of the film.

"I wrote the lyrics all around the guidelines that they gave me for the end of the film, the closing credits and stuff like that. It was such a great experience at the time. It's funny because I have as many people ask me about that one song as I do about Strangeways almost! It got re-released on the Millennium edition of the Le Roux album 'So Fired Up', the album that Jim Odum was on, and they needed one more bonus track. Jim called me up and said 'Do you mind if we used that track? I told him 'On ye go, on ye go pal' [Scottish accent again!]"

Gaun Yersel! (he's got me at it now!)

"Aye, gaun yersel big man! Actually it would be 'wee man' when we're talking about Jim! People have been asking me for years where they could get that track and I was like 'Jim's got the masters, I don't know', but now it's out on a CD. You can actually buy it, which is really cool."

You've sung backing vocals in the past with Michael Bolton. As a matter of interest, what do you think of the way his career has gone?

"He was presented with an opportunity. He'd been struggling for so many years and I think he saw the potential to be successful. Basically...I don't know if 'selling out' is the right term...he went in the direction that he felt his career was going to be successful in, which was going to be the pop, kind of schmaltzy direction. If I'd been in the same position who knows what I would have done. I don't know if I would have done it the exact same way as he's done it, but he's been awfully successful doing it that way so it's hard for me to fault somebody who has 3 kids and figures this might be a good way to feed the family!"

By appealing to housewives?

"Yes, exactly. But I can't cast the first stone because he did have a family to feed at the time. You wanted me to slag him off didn't you? 'Gaun yersel Tel, gee him a good slaggin!'" [oh, oh, Scottish again!]

So, lastly, now that you've come 'Back to Eden', 'Where Do We Go From Here?' (cringe)

"(In hysterics) Well, 'After the Hurt has Gone' I'll probably take my 'Native Sons' out and say 'Goodnight LA'! Actually, at this point, the number one thing I want to do is, I'm really proud of this CD that we've produced, I'm really happy working with the people I'm working with, the record labels. They're all trying so hard, you guys too, to help us bring this kind of music back to whatever prominence we can and who knows. Everybody is trying really hard to get this thing cranked up a little bit here because the people are out there. The problem we're all facing is most of the people that just die for this kind of music and just love it are between the ages of about 26 and 50 and especially in America, those aren't the people who buy records. Those aren't the people who listen to the radio, so you've got to find ways to get to them. So, it's a difficult battle but we seem to be making a bit of a dent here. What I'm going to try and do from this point on is play as many gigs as possible. To increase the awareness that the record's out there, that this type of music is out there, and hopefully we can have quite a bit of fun and continue for years to come making these kind of records and making this kind of music. We're all in it together - every man and woman!"

Yes, we certainly are. I can't wait to see Terry play live again. And apart from that, he owes me a curry!

KARNATAKA

FOLLOWING MY review of the band's second release 'The Storm', I sought an early opportunity to catch Karnataka in the live setting. *This came in May when the Classic Rock Society organised a double bill that also featured Mostly Autumn. After the sell-out concert (and a truly magical experience), I convened with the band in the wee small hours at the hotel where we were all staying. Paul Davies (guitar), Gavin John Griffiths (drums) and occasional band member and saxophonist Steve Simmons busied themselves in providing gastronomic delights (mainly pizza) from a still-open takeaway, leaving me to interview Rachel and Ian Jones (vocals, bass and acoustic guitars respectively) and Jonathon Edwards (keyboards) - the original nucleus of the band.*

First of all I had to get the accentuation of the band's name right, having (wrongly) been saying it as spelt rather than 'Karn-A-Taka'! Nevertheless, I still managed to lapse into the incorrect version at times during the interview.

It would, I guess, be good to start by giving the Fireworks readers a potted history of the band so far and to amplify what I said about you and your second album 'The Storm' back in issue 3.

Ian: Right where do we start? Well Jon, Rachel and myself are really the core of the band insofar as we have been writing stuff together now for more than ten years. Jon and me had started writing instrumental stuff (we didn't have a singer at the time).

Jon: ...and we can't sing!

Rachel: That's true!!

I: Me and Jon got together through a mutual interest in music - but particularly in writing - I was playing bass, Jon was playing keyboards, and we just seemed to hit it off. The stuff we started writing had no particular direction but we enjoyed what we were writing and we were drawing on each other's influences. We had a few ideas and we thought the next step was to find somebody who could sing over this and Jonathan was working at the time with Rachel's mum and she said to Jonathon that my daughter sings - give me a tape, I'll play it to her and we'll sort of take it from there.

J: And this was interesting because we'd written this song in a sort of verse, chorus, verse chorus structure that seemed very obvious to us. We gave the tape to Rachel's mum and when the tape came back and half way through what we thought was the first verse the singing started and carried straight on into the original chorus and the chorus started somewhere else - and we thought this was totally unlike what we were expecting but it was really good. [Laughs all round] And from that time we knew that Rachel was the one. We didn't audition any other singers.

I: At the same time we were trying out other musicians - drummers and guitarists - but nobody seemed to have the right feel for what we were doing. We were drawing on our influences but trying to do something that was also contemporary. We eventually decided to remain as a three piece and used a four-track recorder as backing. We programmed our own drums and keyboards and played live bass/acoustic/keyboards over the top. It was song-based material - a bit of Cocteau's influence I suppose. After a while I think we felt this format was a bit limiting and once again we started playing with other musicians - this time it worked - it brought a new dimension to the sound. We eventually settled on a line up that was to include Gavin on drums and a guitarist called Nigel Boulton who'd had some success with a band in the 80s called the Hepburns. We went under the name of The Big Pink and started to build a strong reputation on the live circuit. We played the Heineken Festival in Swansea at this stage (early 90s) with Manic Street Preachers headlining. We parted company with the guitarist and took a break from the band until '96 when Paul [Davies] joined the ranks and Karnataka came to be! Paul brought a real edge to the sound and his influences [Satriani] were different to the rest of us. We spent some time just writing and eventually recorded the first album in 98.

'The Storm' immediately resonated with me when I heard it. For me it is a superb, mature piece of work and I'm finding it difficult to wait for album number three. However, before considering where you are going to go next, tell me a little of the background to the recording of this.

I: Well, 'The Storm' was really taking things much further, after the first album started to open doors for us in terms of things like The Classic Rock Society.

J: I think when we heard the first album - once it was finished - we just thought that this was really what we want to do. Although the recording of the first album really kick started everything: we started gigging, we got a great review from the CRS, the line-up just clicked, and everybody got on.

I: ...and it was after that we started writing more material, and I think with 'The Storm' there was something kind of cohesive about the whole album - even though the songs are quite different, there's a kind of feel to it which we weren't really aware of when we were writing.

J:We have had some criticism of the album where people have said that it has sameness about it. But one of my favourite albums is Joni Mitchell's 'Hejira' and that album as well has a sameness that goes through all the songs.

J: And there's nothing wrong with that.

I: And that's one of the things I like about 'The Storm' in that it has a feel that runs through the whole album. Clannad are one of my favourite bands - and are very underrated in my opinion. People seem to remember 'Theme From Harry's Game' from the early 80's.

R: ...and 'Robin Of Sherwood'.

I: ...but they are wonderful, wonderful songwriters and there is an identifiable sound and a feel to the things they write but if you really listen they all stand out as individual songs. 'The Storm' has that same kind of feel, with each song having a quality which make them stand out.

J: We took it to Rockfield Studios in Monmouth to mix.

I: We knew we had to take it up a level, really.

R: We had a guy who was mixing the album for us and he was taken ill half way through the process so couldn't finish the job. We were in the situation of having the whole album recorded and nobody to finish the mixing so it was a case of ringing round various studios to see who could fit us in at short notice.

I: And Rockfield just happened to have a spare week at the beginning of January, so we just dropped everything and went.

And now you are preparing for your third album?

I: Yes, there are five new songs that we are playing live - there was one that we didn't do tonight purely because of time constraints with the set - and there are about seven or eight other songs that we are in the process of doing band arrangements with.

So you are actually 'road-testing' these then, are you?

R:It's good to play things live first before recording them.

J: This will be the first album where we will probably have played all of the songs live several times before we record them, because songs just evolve as you play them live - the character comes out - the way the audience reacts, and the way we react with each other. Looking back at the first album now, there are certain songs we have played live, and if we had done so before recording them we would have done them differently. So this album will be fully 'road-tested' before we record it.

There's one song that you played tonight that you rather coyly called '7/8' and you explained that this was the second time you had played a song at the CRS that was as yet untitled. I felt that this was a really strong track, but it apparently didn't go quite as you planned tonight.

I: Yeah...

J: It's still evolving. We've rehearsed it several times and changed the arrangement several times We've played it live once previously in a slightly different arrangement to tonight...and it'll probably change again by the time it gets recorded.

I: I think that the people who have heard the first two albums will recognise the kind of leap we made from 'Karnataka' to 'The Storm' and there will be a similar kind of leap from 'The Storm' to the next album in terms of the arrangements and probably the production as well.

J: When we talked about the new album we agreed that if we can't do better than 'The Storm' then we won't do it.

I: The new album is intended to be a real benchmark for us. The thing I really like about this '7/8' (until we get a

better name) is that it's got a series of movements so that there are songs within the song. People may therefore give it the 'progressive' tag, although it was more of a subconscious decision to develop this structure. But it works very well in this instance.

J: And part of it is that we are working on a variety of things at any one time, and what tends to happen is that you work on one song and you find that that bit from another song that didn't work, works with this, and it expands.

Well I look forward to hearing how it finally turns out. I'm sure it will be a high-point on the album, perhaps the title track?

I: It depends what title it ends up having.

Both 'Karnataka' and 'The Storm' have now been released in Japan. What reaction have you had, and do you have any plans to go and perform there?

I: We'd love to perform there. If a promoter shows any interest, we'd go tomorrow!

R: The reaction to the albums has been great; they've been very enthusiastic about them.

I: And we've been interviewed by Tetsu Uchida for Euro Rock Press magazine, which is a bit like a Japanese version of Q. He had picked up on 'The Storm' from various sources and had managed to get hold of a CD - possibly from New Zealand where we were selling some - and this guy came over and interviewed us. We also had a good review in the magazine and a couple of months later a two-page spread. We were quite surprised to discover that there is quite a big celtic scene in Japan and he was quite interested in the Welsh/celtic angle to the music and whilst we don't describe ourselves as a celtic rock band that is another element that gets drawn into our music.

But in addition to Japan you have now signed a deal for Immrama records to join forces with Voiceprint so that Karnataka's products will now be released world-wide. This is clearly a tremendous development for the band. How did it come about?

I: It was really the culmination of a series of events rather than one sudden thing - although winning the CRS awards seemed to clinch it. Being picked up by Bob Harris was probably the most important factor in getting us to where we are now, and I suppose that people associate his radio show with a degree of credibility and getting the music out to a national audience certainly didn't do any harm. So it was a combination of that and the fact that people like yourself had picked up on the album and that we were getting very positive reviews in this country and abroad and then finally last November being voted Best New Band and Rach getting Best Female Vocalist by the CRS. Voiceprint has been keeping an eye on us and they could see what we were trying to do and having spoken with Rob Ayling the chairman of the company he was just very positive about our direction and music.

You are obviously thrilled about the fact that Bob Harris has picked up on 'The Storm' and that tracks from this have now been featured four times. Do you have any idea why he connected with your album? Lots of other bands would love to know the secret, I'm sure!

R: It's difficult to know why.

J: We sent the CD off, so he had the music there to start with, but I think probably the fact that people who had seen us live or who had bought the album were in many cases listeners to the show and e-mailed him to say 'Have you heard this new band - can you play them?' So it was probably down to people who like our music getting onto Bob about it.

So there's the message then. It's really a case of 'Pester the man, and make sure he's got the music in the first place!'

I: Yeah. I think it's a shame if people go and see a new band and they like them, then it's great for people to come up to you afterwards and say how much they have enjoyed it but it's even better if they email other people, especially media people, to tell them about it. I think one factor (I and know he probably gets hundreds of CDs a weeks to listen to) is whereas a lot of progressive rock tracks are not songs in the traditional sense a lot of the tracks on 'The Storm' are song-based and with a strong melody element.

And probably the sort of structure he is looking for as well.

I: Yeah, I think so, and some of the songs start off acoustically.

J: But having said that I think we've never gone out of our way to make the music sound anything other than the way we want it. We haven't developed it thinking 'what do we need to do to get it played on the radio'. We like it the way it is, and that's why it's the way it is!

Paul: (interjecting for the first time): ...and we figure that if we like it, then surely some other people will too.

You also have an excellent web-site (Karnataka.org.uk). There it is stated that 'The Storm' has started to open doors for the band. Can you amplify this statement?

J: Well getting played on Bob Harris and the CRS awards almost certainly led to us getting the support slot on the Porcupine Tree tour.

Talking of which I think it was your first overseas tour - to Holland and Belgium - where some dates were, as you've said were in support to Porcupine Tree whilst others were purely Karnataka occasions. We haven't heard much from Rach yet, so perhaps you'd like to tell us how well the tour went and to give us some of your abiding memories of the tour?

R: It was absolutely brilliant, and so exciting to be going off and doing something on that scale. For a start and we found that as soon as we got there we were being treated on a completely different level from some of the places we have played at in Britain. You get taken very seriously - people are prepared to listen and they are prepared to give you the time to do what you want to do. Our most abiding memory will be of the first gig we had ever done abroad - at The Paradiso, Amsterdam. Porcupine Tree had 'phoned at 4.00pm to say they were still in Calais. They had problems with their bus, and they might not turn up! So we might have ended up doing a headline on the very first night at a venue like that - but they got the problem sorted out and so they turned up!

I: One thing that we noticed that was very different in Europe was the audiences. Over here it can be a case of 'We're too cool to clap' whereas they seem much more enthusiastic about the music over there. Many of the people who came to see us had never heard our music, but when they did so were very enthusiastic, and showed it. It's as if they're willing you to succeed, to be good, and have a good time themselves. With UK audiences it seems more a case of 'Okay - impress us'.

R: Often you find that if you do a support tour on a scale like that over here, you'd find that a lot of the people just wouldn't be bothered to come and watch us. They'd just stay in the bar. We didn't find that happening at all. Everybody was in there right from the start.

J: And Porcupine Tree were great - a very nice band to work with and we got on really well together.

I: One of the best memories for me was the second gig, 013 in Tilburg, when all of Porcupine Tree had come out of the dressing room to listen to us and seemed to be really into what we were playing. They were really positive and encouraging us - they even bought copies of our CDs, which was great!

J: The 013 is a 2400 seater, and the largest venue we have played to date, and the sound system was just fantastic. That was the first time we have been on stage playing and just thought 'Yes, this is how it is supposed to sound!'

R: The live sound we've always wanted!

You are currently writing and rehearsing - as we've previously mentioned - material for your third album and you featured four new tracks tonight. When do you hope the new album will be ready?

I: I think the plan is to start recording mid-to-late July, and hopefully will be finished by December so the planned release date would be very early next year.

How will it compare to 'The Storm'?

J: It'll be better! It'll be different - and the same! It'll have the Karnataka sound.

But will there be any surprises?

I: Oh yes! We're bringing in a producer, which we haven't done with the first two albums, which we recorded and produced ourselves, and on this one we've decided to bring someone in who we know really well and who really appreciates the music and works for a big studio in Stockholm.

What's his name?

I: Steve Evans, and he took an interest in what we were doing. He got slightly involved with 'The Storm' - he added some percussion samples on a couple of tracks ('Dreamer' and 'The Journey') - but unfortunately he had to go back to Stockholm at the point where we needed to mix down. But at the time said, next time you start recording I'd like to get involved earlier. Steve writes a lot of his own material - instrumental stuff - which whilst it doesn't sound the same as us - in terms of attitude towards the writing is not a million miles away, and he just offered to help out. He's a very experienced producer, and it will make a difference having someone who is a bit more impartial and can perhaps get us to think in a slightly different direction sometimes.

It's unusual for a husband and wife to feature in a band. What are the pluses and minuses of this - be honest!

R: Pluses - you get to share all of the really, really good times. You do a gig and you can go home and talk about it until 4 in the morning and the other person understands because they were there.

I: Negatives - there is no life outside of Karnataka. There are not many negatives really.
(Rachel giggles again as if knowing something that they would not dare to tell me!)

R: It takes up a lot of time and means that it becomes a priority, for instance when booking a holiday and there is an opportunity to do a gig, then the gig comes first.

J: And if there any band disputes, they vote for each other.

R: But if you have a really tough time you go home after a gig and you can't switch off, because you are taking it to bits.

I: But it's mostly positives.

And finally, what are your hopes and aspirations for the band over the next few years - and for yourselves individually?

I: Good question! [Clearly Ian had not thought about this much!!]

R: Making the third album even better than the last two, and getting out there and playing

I: Yes, it's coming up with a selection of songs that we think 'Yeah, that deserves to be listened to'. And from an egotistical point of view its really nice to get the music out there and think that people are listening to it.

R: We'd definitely like to go abroad again.

I: When the new album comes out, we'll definitely set up another European tour

J: I think as well it would be great if we could make enough money doing this to not have to do anything else. Doing this full time would be great. But even if we can't achieve that, to just do it and to make enough money to do another album is enough...while the music's good enough is great. We do this because it's fun, and because it's what we want to do. I think the trouble with a lot of bands that don't get anywhere is that they don't have that drive.

I: If you're creative then you just have to do it. It's not a matter of 'Shall I write a song'. You just get on with it. Something we all share is that we have an immense pride in what we write: writing is just something we love doing and it's the buzz you get from listening to it and knowing that other people enjoy it as well.

J: Also the three of us have been in and out of bands together for ten years, the five of us have been together for about four years, and we all know each other well enough now that when we write everyone is concerned with what is best for the music. We don't take things personally, and nobody is concerned with their own egos. It's taken a long time to reach that, but I think we are there now.

That's great. Thanks for giving Fireworks readers an insight into Karnataka. I hope that interest in the band and its music continues to go from strength to strength, and I certainly hope to see you all again very soon. Meanwhile, the sampler CD accompanying this issue features 'Heaven Can Wait' from "The Storm" - an excellent introduction to your music for anyone who has not previously had the pleasure.

FIREWORKS

Liz Larin

★ An Interview by Rob Evans ★

FOR ME Liz Larin would have to rate as one of the best overlooked female singers of the last decade. She's had two albums released on a major label which if there had been any justice in this world should have been huge. The first album saw Liz finding her feet as a musician and singer while the second 'Test Of Faith' was nothing short of breathtaking in both it's songs and delivery. That album was released in 93 and since then we've heard nothing from this talented female until now. Having formed her own label she has released 'Merry Wicked' her first album in over seven years, an album that carries on where her last one left of. Join us now to find out more about this female phenomenon.

How did you get started in the music business?

I started writing songs when I was ten, and therefore ended up teaching myself how to play guitar. One outlet for music at that time was doing music for church services. So, by the time I was twelve years old I was making money playing and singing in two different churches. My playmates and I 'discovered' a local music store where they would hold jam sessions and we could not get enough of the place. I would go in with my two little girlfriends and play and sing the songs I was writing. By the time I was fifteen my father gave in and paid for my guitar lessons at that music store and I went through three teachers in three weeks. I was proud to be asked to join the teaching staff and ended up being the youngest music teacher they had ever had there. There were a lot of people (musicians) at the music store who were looking out for me and encouraging me to play. They would let me warm up for their bands and generally taught me what is was to be a professional musician. My parents, of course, were not happy with all of this and I had to leave home when I was 16. I would teach after school then go to a gig and that is how I kept myself alive. I was scary but exciting time. That's when I discovered the Detroit jazz scene and began to study jazz.

Who or what has been the biggest influence on you as a musician?

Many different people have influenced me over the years for many different reasons. When I started I was influenced by Ricky Lee Jones and sounded so much like her that I realized I had to find my own voice. Then of course, this is the home of Aretha Franklin, and I was expected to be able to belt those tunes out. Then I was very moved and still am, by U2 and Bono. His singing really moves me in the way that he tackles internal conflict. You can hear the doubt and the struggle in his voice. I've always tried to 'sing it out', to exercise the demons, so to speak.

What bands did you grow up with and how did they help in creating the style of music that can be found on your CDs.

I grew up in the Detroit music scene and I saw Stevie Wonder play at the Detroit Fair when I was probably seven years old. This being the home of Motown, it was easy to think that everyone could be that musical. There is an edge here, too, this being an industrial town, that has produced a lot of rock and blues bands. This is the birthplace of George Clinton and the Funkadelics, The Jackson Five, Kid Rock, Emimen, etc. The combination of soul and rock and jazz is very strong here and very contagious. I learned how to do what I do from playing the local clubs and getting feedback from some great musicians. And the audiences are tough here, they really expect you to show them something real and not be a piece of fluff.

Tell us about your first band Rebel Heels who released the CD 'One by One by One'.

I originally met my writing and performing partner, Michael King, when I asked him to play a few gigs with me and to pose as my boyfriend to ward off a troublesome club owner. We ended up becoming great friends and found we had an unusually creative spark together. We haunted bookstores, talked and debated constantly. We practiced all the time and then went to the gigs to try out the new material. We would ask for feedback from everyone, kept the tunes that worked, tossed out the ones that didn't and just kept on going. We played as a duo with

a drum unit; I played bass, guitar and keyboards, Michael played guitar, guitar synthesizer and keyboards. Before we knew it we were packing clubs so we decided to release a five song EP. That's when things took off for us. We were getting radio airplay, the club we were playing in made a commercial for us, we were on MTV basement tapes, and we were continuing to go to New York every six months to hound any record companies we could get into to give us a deal. When it happened, it happened fast and there was a bidding war. We ended up going with Atlantic Records and had our pick of producers. We chose Rupert Hine, whose work we really admired (The Fixx, Howard Jones, now Duncan Sheik). He got the tape and flew into Detroit within a week. We picked him up at the airport and took him to the club we were playing called Doug's Body Shop (which is featured in the Aretha Franklin video 'Freeway To Love'.) Both Michael and I fell in love with Rupert Hine and his ideas; he was calm and wanted to do a creative record and not worry about hit songs. Soon after we flew to England (with our new drummer, Danny Cox) to record at Farmyard Studios. It was magical, being in England, the home of so much great writing and music. Rupert made sure we focused on the music, not on the business and gave us the space we needed to just be creative. When the CD came out, we learned a lot about what happens at record companies with new bands. We toured as much as we could, opening for any band that would have us; Cheap Trick, REO Speedwagon, Robert Palmer, and even Greg Allman Band.

Moving on a few years and you released your first solo CD 'Test your faith' on Atlantic records. How did that come about?

After the Rebel Heels CD came out, the band was very disappointed with the way that the record company dealt with the record. They just looked at us after six weeks of having the record out and 'so, what else have you got?' The band didn't want to go forward; we had problems with our manager and we could see who was telling us the truth and who wasn't. Michael quit because he wanted to produce bands and put out his own music. The drummer Danny, went off and did a solo thing. I took some time off and moved to Santa Barbara, California, for a change of scenery. The record company had been focusing their efforts on me and when my band quit, they asked me to do a solo album. I came back to Detroit and worked with legendary producer and good friend Ben Grosse (??) I kept writing and recording for about a year with the support of engineer Rob Robinson until we all went to Florida to finish up and to mix the music. I never really wanted to be on my own, I always like being in a band, but everything kept pushing me to be a solo artist. I asked a lot of friends to come in and to help me with that recording; guitarist Randy Jacobs (Seal, Tears for Fears, Was Not Was, etc.) drummer Tony Thompson (Chic, Power Station, David Bowie). Michael King played guitar on a couple of cuts. It was a very fun record to make, I was playing with the female warrior idea.

On 'Test of Faith' you had a very glamorous and sexy image (Emma Peel of the Avengers springs to mind). On your recent CD you seem to have toned down your look. Is this the real you compared to the manufactured look of the record company. Did sex sell ?

Yes, sex sells, as we know. I'm not one to wear a lot of make-up (I didn't wear any on my first album cover) but I thought I would just turn myself over to the 'masters of image'. I got a dose of what models go though and frankly, that's a tough job. It was interesting for me to see how other people thought I should look, how someone who produces the kind of music I do 'should look.' I just didn't feel comfortable walking around like that. I think of myself as a musician and an artist, and if that comes off sexy naturally, then that's fine with me.

Were those times happy memories or not?

Well, they were kind of scary yet exciting times for me. Being involved with the music 'business' to that extent was taking me further and further away from the music. I'm glad I took the opportunity to go on that adventure but now that I have experienced that, I have chosen to stick to being true to myself and just being a better musician and writer (and person, for that matter). I really love having my own label again. it is very satisfying to not have to deal with all those opinions of what I should do or not do to have a 'hit' song. I can follow my own 'muse'and I trust it; the music has never led me astray.

Do you play live in the tates? If so do you include any covers in your set.

Yes, I play a lot in the states, except when I am recording, which is a lot of the time. I played in Hollywood when I lived there; The Whiskey, The Roxy, The Dragon Fly, Club Luna, House of Blues, etc. Now that I am in Detroit I grab all kinds of gigs, playing solo sometimes, playing with my band other times, all kinds of variations. I help out other bands with their writing (playing bass and guitar) and I do a lot of recording sessions. I really love it here, Detroit is a great music city. I will play a few covers here and there of songs I wish I had written; from Zepplin to Leonard Cohen.

Eight years on and you've just released your second solo CD 'Merry Wicked' on your own label 'Bona dea Music'. How would you describe it to the readers.

Hmmm. The Merry Wicked CD— after a couple of years of living in studios in Los Angeles, recording/experimenting, of course, we ended up with a lot of material. Randy Jacobs (guitarist) and Scott Spock (producer/keyboardist) and I were listening to the material one night in the studio and they were commenting that the music falls into two categories; in one the girl is very sweet and innocent, and in the other, she is sexy and little wicked. The music comes from me trying to join the two sides, to come to terms with the inner and outer world, what is expected of us and what we as animals want to do. I write a lot about how crazy it is to live in a city (Hollywood) where 'being famous' is a goal most were trying to achieve. I found it all really shallow and unfulfilling and was very happy when I decided to leave. The music is edgy, groove oriented, rockin', moody, and even sweet at times.

Have you had any major record label interest?

Oh, yes. There were many meetings with record label executives. There was interest to sign me but I never really felt like I clicked with any of those guys. I realize that music and business are like oil and water, but I had already had two CD's out on Atlantic Records and was hoping to find someone who was going to let me do what I do and to not try to make me the next Brittany Spears, just because the return on their money would be incredible. I just wanted to continue to put out good music over a period of time. I wasn't sure I wanted another deal, in the end, I just wanted a chance to make good music. Coming home and putting music out on my own label BONA DEA MUSIC (which means 'great and benevolent goddess' seemed like the best option. I'm still in touch with labels but my priorities are different now.

Pick your three favorite songs from either of your CDs and tell us why.

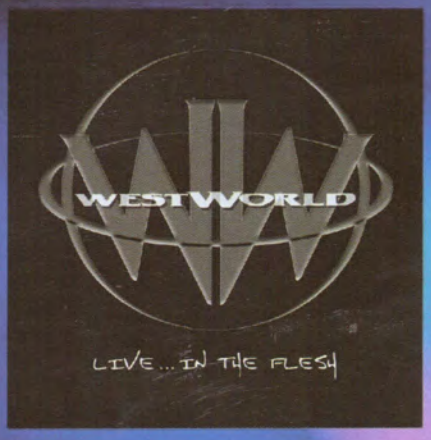
That's tough. I'm always interested in hearing from other people which songs they like and why. Probably "Empty Love" off the Rebel Heels CD, because it's about a girl who longs to know adventure, knows she can't stay anywhere for long, and wonders how love fits in to the equation. "All of My Life" is a sexy song off the "Test Your Faith" CD, a celebration of love and lust. Off of the Merry Wicked CD, I would have to say "Door To Charity", which is about something my Dad once said. He said when you are having a really bad day, go do something nice for someone else and don't tell anyone.

What type of coverage has your CD had in the states?

Music, for me, has always been like a message in a bottle. I put in out there and I am amazed where it ends up. I sell a lot of CD's at gigs, so I get to meet a lot of the people who have my CD's. I really believe in the word of mouth approach, it weeds things out. Most of all, I can tell if it's any good. If the CD is good, people will but it, not because some big company is pushing it as the latest, greatest thing. I like this underground approach and I think the web is wonderful for keeping in touch with people directly, it's immediate. I sell a lot of Merry Wicked CD's from the web-site where you can check out a bit of each song. You will be able to get the CD on Amazon.com and CD Baby, soon, because I have had a lot of requests for that.

What's next and what does the future hold for you?

I am working on a new CD. Hanging out in the Detroit music scene has allowed me to get back in touch with the underground; to 'get my groove back' as they say. It's real and it's about people; and I like that. I have some new musicians I am working with and it is all very positive. Part of me could just live in a studio and play with sounds all day. But I know in the end that I have to get out there and allow the music to be judged. I'm just going to keep recording, writing, and playing live anywhere and anytime I can.



Tony Harnell [TNT],
Bruno Ravel [Danger Danger],
Mark Reale [Riot], John O'Reilly [Rainbow]
The third album from Westworld
features Illusions, 10,000 Lovers in one
and Skin, a truly essential journey in rock !

In all good stores August 13th

Danny Vaughn and his fellow
ex Tyketto members return
bigger and better than ever.
Fearless sees an amazing return to the
Tyketto classic sound !
In all good stores August 20th
See Vaughn on tour within the UK
August 15th - August 26th

One of the true legends of
the NWOBHM return
with a blistering new album
continuing where Spellbound
and The Cage left off.

In all good stores September 3rd

Z-ROCK 2001

September 8th

Venue: Capitol, Mannheim
TYGERS OF PAN TANG, ENUFF Z NUFF, VON GROOVE,
JADED HEART, HUMANIMAL, DREAMHUNTER, CONTAGIOUS, SEVEN WISHES
Telephone hotlines www.mano.de or tel: +49-6204-975245

EUROPE'S PREMIER MELODIC HARD ROCK LABEL

Z RECORDS WEB SITE: www.zrecords.net
24hr INFOLINE: +44 151 525 0099

CARGO RECORDS

CARGO RECORDS

Heart A

Heart to Heart with Soul Doctor's

HAVING ACHIEVED major success with Fair Warning, especially in Japan, it came as a shock to just about everyone when Tommy Heart up and left, joining forces with ex-Bonfire bassist Joerg Deisinger to form the more hard rocking Soul Doctor. *Kieran Dargan chats with Tommy to get to the Heart of the matter.*

Hi Tommy. I've been trying to get hold of you for a while now, however you have been very evasive.

"Hahahah...no, not really. Well, maybe a little. To be honest I didn't want to do interviews or anything until the album was released and everybody had the chance to hear it. Until now I, or we didn't really have much to say."

I guess the first question everybody would like answered is why did you leave Fair Warning, especially considering how successful they were?

"I am a band guy and by that I mean I am not a solo artist but I want to be a part of a band where everybody is fighting for the same thing and it wasn't like that anymore."

So who exactly was to blame for that?

"Well nobody really. It actually started a few years ago. I started to feel really uneasy, especially when CC left the band. I was very close with CC and it affected me but I decided to carry on so then Andy decided to leave after 'Four'. I had decided that I had enough and I was going to leave. So I think it was a combination of things rather than one particular incident but I felt we weren't doing things together anymore and I wasn't happy with that."

So how come you stayed in the band and sang on the 'Four' album?

"I had already made up my mind to leave but I didn't want to just go and leave them with nothing, no singer and maybe no deal, so I decided once the album was out I would then leave."

Seems like a very brave or very silly decision to leave a band that was doing so well, sell out tours in Japan, every album selling in excess of 100,000 copies and above all, in this day and age, a band situation that offered financial security?

"Well it wasn't about money, it never was. I'm a rock and roll singer and I love playing live but with Fair Warning we only played about seven shows a year and that's not enough. I want to play at least sixty shows every year, in fact we have already played almost twenty five shows on our tour with Kingdom Come and it was great. Sure it's always great to sell a lot of records and have people hear your music but if we toured more we could have maybe sold even more."

So was it down to the fact that you didn't play live often enough that finally made you say 'That's it. I've had enough' or was there something else?

"Well yes, it played a part. I wanted to play live all the time, everywhere, and the others didn't want to do that. Also we had lost that feeling of brothers, you know...all for one, one for all. I had been writing songs as well but everything I had written was rejected by Helge and Ule who I have to say are much better song writers than me, but it got to the stage that I decided that's it, I have to leave. I had no other choice."

From the live albums Fair Warning recorded, and the large amount of live bootlegs I have, you seemed like a really good band live. Why do you think the others didn't want to play live as much as you did?

"Perhaps they are too old. They are older than me and they have done it before with Zeno where as I am younger. I am only 33 and I wanted to get out and play rock and roll every night. I don't know really, perhaps you had better ask them."

Why do you think your songs were rejected by the others? Was it anything to do with the large publishing cheque they receive for each album or were the songs in a different style than Fair Warning?

"Hahahaha.....I don't know about that, you would have to ask them. Maybe some of the songs were a little more straight forward rock and roll than what we played with Fair Warning but I don't think they even gave my songs serious consideration, and I was hurt by that. I felt I had a lot to offer but they kept pushing me aside so I bought some studio equipment and began recording demos with my long time friend Chris Lyne, who at that time gave me lots of encouragement and we got on really well together both on a personal level and song writing wise. He gave me the confidence I needed to keep writing so we went from there."

So how did they take your decision to leave the band?

"We spoke about it and I told them my reasons for leaving as I have told you already and I think they were a little mad at me...well maybe more than a little, hahaha, but I think after a while they accepted my decision. I spoke to Helge on the telephone a few weeks ago which was nice and I think he now understands I had to do it. We had a good conversation and he's not mad at me any more. Well maybe not as much, hahahaha."

nd Soul...

Tommy Heart...by Kieran Dargon

Do you know if they intend to carry on as Fair Warning, maybe get a new singer?

"I don't know, it is possible. Helge didn't say but he has a new band and he seems to be very happy now."

So, Soul Doctor...how did you all get together?

"Well after the 'Four' album was done, I met Joerg who wasn't very happy with his own situation with Paul Sabu. We then got together and wrote and demoed some songs with Chris and it felt great, it felt like a real band even though it wasn't at that time. I then asked Zacky, our drummer, to come in and help us out so it grew from there...the birth of Soul Doctor."

How would you describe the Soul Doctor 'sound'?

"Hmmmmmm, that's difficult because in my mind we don't sound like anybody else. I would say we are definitely a hard rock band with good songs, the kind to make people get up and enjoy themselves, but I don't know if we actually sound like anybody else."

I thought you sounded like a mixture of Thunder, Bad Company, Rainbow and AC/DC, with a little hint of your previous outfit Fair Warning.

"Wow! Wow, thanks, it's an honour to be compared to some of those bands. I grew up listening to some of them and now my work is being compared to them...amazing. As for the Fair Warning comparisons, well yes I suppose maybe a little because it is my voice but musically I think we are more straightforward rock and roll...heavier, harder edged and not as...pop!"

I know Fireworks received one of the first promo copies of the album. Now that it's actually out on the street how is it doing?

"I'm amazed. In Japan we are on Marquee Avalon and they are very, very happy with the initial first six weeks sales. In Europe we are signed to Massacare.The album is coming out in Europe next week but so far the press reaction to it has been really good. I'm doing far more interviews for European magazines than I have ever done in the past with Fair Warning...it's great and I hope it continues. It was always difficult for us [Fair Warning] to get coverage in Europe but that seems to be changing...very positive reaction so far."

You are a star in Japan. Does the 'Big in Japan' tag ever bother you, especially as some magazines and web sites tend to use that as a derogatory comment?

"No, not at all. I'm grateful to all my fans in Japan, and all over the world for their love and support for the last fifteen years. If an artist is bigger in one country than another what's the problem? I know several bands who are 'big' in Japan and are by no means as successful at home. The Japanese fans are extremely loyal and have good musical taste. They are not influenced that much by trends and they support artists that make music that they enjoy. If you make music that people enjoy and they buy it, making you a a big name. Is that wrong? I don't think so. Perhaps it's jealousy on the parts of others who are not as successful or who are jealous of your success."

It seems you are going back to basics with Soul Doctor, a small club tour with Kingdom Come, gigging everywhere and anywhere in support of the new record.

"Yes, it is going back to basics. I...no, WE want to play everywhere we can...small clubs, theatre's, stadiums, anywhere with electricity. It is so important to me to be in a band situation with three other people I can trust. We don't want to be overnight sensations, we want to make a record every year and tour it, build things up from the ground. Things like that make a real band...on a tourbus, playing live, doing things as a big family. That is so important to not only me, but to the others also. In fact it is so important to Zacky that he is moving from Hamburg and into our band house in Munich...that's the type of commitment to Soul Doctor that we are talking about. We have a band house in Munich in which we live, write, rehearse and do everything together just like one big family and it shows. We are very happy with the set up, so much so in fact that we have already started working on material for the next Soul Doctor album, which we hope to have out next year."

So what are the plans for Soul Doctor for the remainder of the year?

"We hope to be able to play live a lot more. We are playing Wacken in the summer and we hope to be able to do other festivals also. We would love to play the UK also. I did play there with my old band V2 a long time ago, but never with Fair Warning so maybe we'll get the chance, who knows. If there is a promoter out there willing to get us over for some shows then please get in touch. We'd love to do it."

Finally Tommy, is there anything that you would like to say to all your fans out there?

"Thank you for everything. Thank you for your support during my time with Fair Warning and I hope you will take the time to check out the new Soul Doctor album...it's a rocker...hahahahahaha, and most of all I hope to see everybody on tour in the future."

Jean Beauvoir

Bare To The Bones with the Crown Prince of Rock himself... by Rob Evans

LISTEN UP! Beauvoir is back! Party time is here again! Oh yes, the man with golden voice has returned with an acoustical jamboree to suit every mood and occasion. Read on...

Your new solo release, 'Bare To The Bones' is an inspired piece of work. What made you go down the acoustic avenue and what's the story behind the cover of 'California Dreamin'?

"Thank you! I wanted to make a record that was a bit more personal with less distractions from instrumentation. I admit, it's not completely stripped down, but I was hoping that it would enable the fans to listen to the stories, the lyrics. I'm happy that it seems to have worked. I get a lot of e-mails from fans that say they see themselves in the lyrics and can relate. This is an accomplishment for me, because that's what I tried to get across. 'California Dreamin' is a song I always loved. Every time I heard it in a film or on the radio it gave me a special feeling and made me think of my times living in California. That song represented an era which was actually before my time, yet seemed to be a very cool time. I took it as a challenge to see if I could do the song justice. At this point, I also look at it as a tribute to John Phillips, who died recently."

You recently did a couple of showcases in Italy with Crystal Ball backing you. How did it go?

"It went well despite some drawbacks; they got stuck in traffic and arrived two hours before we had to play, which left us no time to rehearse. Somehow we made it work! They're good guys and the next day we had more time. We rocked the house in the end!"

What type of coverage has 'Bare To The Bones' received throughout the world?

"It's getting received very well. It's not been released in the US yet but it's doing pretty well in Europe. "Monday" is getting airplay on big stations in Germany and Denmark and the single's not even out yet. I've booked TV shows for the fall and I will be going for press promotion in France, Sweden, Spain as of now and hopefully the UK too."

How did you get started in the music business?

"I actually started playing drums in my Junior High School rock band. It was started by a teacher that I had who was in a band that had opened for The Who. We got along and I became a kind of recruiter of guys in school who wanted to play rock and roll. We played at all the school events and then I continued by putting my own band together to play in clubs during the summer. From there I ended up moving to bass then guitar and singing."

Who or what has been the biggest influence on you as a musician?

"It's hard to be specific as there have been so many things. I grew up on Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, The Who, Kiss, early Jackson 5, Motown stuff and a lot of other music. I liked different music for different reasons. Rock intrigued me the most because of the bigger than life image that it portrayed. I always felt music should be larger than life as far as live shows go. Bands like this were most influential to me. I always liked great music as well so whatever I heard that I liked ended up on my turntable."

What bands did you grow up with and how did they help in creating your style of music?

"As far as these bands influence on my music, once again it's not specific. Since I've been playing music for so long, I really don't single out records that much that I listen to all the time. Actually I rarely listen to an entire album. My influences are probably a combination of all the different kinds of music I've been exposed to which I think gives you a kind subconscious library of ideas. I try to put different elements in the records and try not to stick to any set rules. I feel that keeps the music fresh. Mostly, I just open my mind and let the ideas flow naturally. To tell you the truth, I don't know where they come from, I'm just glad they keep coming!"

Who were the first and last bands that you saw live?

"The first band was Kiss at Madison Square Garden and the last was Doro in Germany."

Pick your three favourite and songs tell us why.

"I'm asked this question very often and I can never answer it. I'll give it a shot off the top of my head. Bending the rules a little! "November Rain", "Stairway to Heaven" and "Bohemian Rhapsody". I know these are not new songs but if I think of great songs, these are top of the list. The reason is they all accomplished what I mentioned earlier brilliantly. The fusing of different influences or musical styles yet maintaining their image. These songs rocked, yet touched you emotionally, all ages could relate to them because they defied all musical barriers. These were great songs in my eyes. There are not too many these days."

Pick your three favourite songs from any of your albums and tell us why.

"Well, "Standing on the Corner" was a personal song in which I felt I did a good job of conveying a feeling. It just makes me feel good whenever I hear it. "Never Went Down" - I liked the story of this song. It was about my Mom, but using a lot of analogies. This song also touches me when I hear it. "Missing the Young Days" - I also thought it had an interesting story. When I listen to this song I feet I'm in the story, even though it was fictional. It talked about me running in to an old man, who decided to tell me about how he missed being young and all the wonderful things he used to do. He was giving me advice that I should cherish my youth and not take it for granted."

What's next and what does the future hold for you?

"We are currently working on a new Crown of Thorns album that will be released in February. I've also written two songs for a great French Sony artist called Noemie Christians, and I'm producing another artist named Lyn for In Motion. She was featured on the last Scorpions album. I just will keep working and I'll look forward to doing some touring in the near future."

Over the course of your Crown of Thorns releases, there seems to have been a natural progression to a more modern sound. This has frustrated a lot of the AOR brigade who are stuck in the past and expect you to just give us the debut on every CD you release. What do you say to these blinkered, narrow minded idiots?

"This seems to be an on-going issue. On the new Thorns album, we'll be going back to the roots somewhat in the style of the songwriting but production wise I have a very difficult time making the same record over and over again. It's uncreative and boring. I feel every record has its time and our view as a band is that we need to grow. There are so many new sounds and elements available to us that we feel the need to experiment with them. I'm sure that these people who as you say are stuck in the past use computers instead of type writers - or do they? I have nothing against liking music from the past as you can see in my list of favorite songs. AOR is a very vague word. I feel all successful bands have managed to add modern elements that not only the old fans will accept, but that give them the opportunity to reach new people as well. Examples are bands like Aerosmith and Bon Jovi, who have new records filled with drum loops and modern sounds, but they still maintain their integrity."

The Mohawk has gone and you have a very retro style new image. Is this you moving with the times or was there a reason behind it....we miss the mohawk!!

"I loved the Mohawk too. It represented some of the best times of my life. The truth is, living in Florida's Key West, I did a lot of snorkelling and I got tired of having the fish chase me around!"

You've done some writing with Michael Voss in the past. Don't you think it's about time that you both got together and recorded the killer CD that we know you are capable of. C'mon, stop messing around and get it on!!

"I enjoyed working with Michael. I think he's very talented. We'll probably make a great record together. You never know, maybe in the future."

If you could record a CD and have any musician in the world on it. Who would you include apart from yourself!

"Tony Thompson is still one of my favorite drummers and Hawk is my man! His style is unique. As far as guitar players, I love Tommy Lafferty. At the same time, I've always really liked Ritchie Blackmore, Steve Stevens and John Sykes. As far as bass players, I have to stroke my own guy, Michael Paige, and I've already worked with my other favorite guys, Doug Winbush, and TM Stevens."

Now that Kiss are grinding to a halt and calling it a day. Do you see yourself working with Paul Stanley again in the future?

"We haven't really been in touch since I've been spending so much time in Europe, but you know how life works, everything comes around. You never know, possibly."

Give us 3 reasons why the readers of Fireworks should buy your albums.

"So I can buy a house in the South of France!!! No seriously, they should buy them because they are records I believe that still have content. I try to make fun records but still records with lyrics that hopefully people can relate to. I try to talk about things that we all go through everyday or, you can just buy a Crown Of Thorns record 'cause you wanna rock!!!"

Anything you would like to add or say to the readers of Fireworks ?

"Thanks for the support and keep listening to my music. It will always be full of surprises."

FIREWORKS

ALBUM REVIEWS

WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT IN THE WORLD OF ROCK!

Shoot For The Stars!

AEROSMITH
'Just Push Play'
Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.

JUST PUSH PLAY - Fuckin' A! - Just push play - We're comin at ya anyway! *So states Steven Tyler - the ultimate All-American hard rock troubadour - and who are we to disagree? Oh yes indeed, America's, if not the world's, finest purveyors of the hard rock genre have returned. So come one, come all and join the rock 'n' roll circus that is Aerosmith!*

A word of warning to all the die-hard pink and fluffy AORsters out there - pink and fluffy this is not! Thank the fuckin' Lord!! What this is is Aerosmith at the peak of their creative power. An album of unbelievable might and magnitude that is crass yet classy, rowdy yet restrained, a cauldron of contrasts, a flirtatious feast of pure hard rock Americana!

From the opening shimmerings of 'Beyond Beautiful', you just know you're in for a trick or treat or two - a salacious slow burner that soars and swoops like a love addicted angel of heaven. Title track, 'Just Push Play, is a tenacious rub-a-dub-rocker guaranteed to make your body snap, crackle and pop! Check it out and I'm sure you'll get my drift! 'Jaded' needs no introduction, I'm sure, an unashamedly commercial pop-metallic firecracker of emotional meanderings - a block-buster to end all blockbusters!

'Trip Hoppin', 'Under Your Skin' and the awe-some 'Outta Your Head' are trademark Aerosmith party rockers that every self-respecting hard rock connoisseur has come to know and love - a trilogy of rediscovery complimented by a host of supafunky horns-a-blastin'! Oo-er!!

Ballads? You want ballads? No problemo. 'Fly Away From Here' is the album's tour-de-force power-ballad in the vein of 'Don't Wanna Miss A Thing'. 'Sunshine' projects a sun-kissed radiance and features some delectable lyrical devilry from old Stevie boy himself: "I sold my soul for a one night stand - I followed Alice into Wonderland - I ate the mushroom and I danced with the queen - Yeah we danced between all the lines..." Top that, if you can, all you pretenders to the throne! I think not!! The luxuriant 'Luv Lies' is rather special too, whilst the tantalising treachery of 'Avant Garden' is just too good to ignore, so cool...sooooo Aerosmith!

Closing track, 'Face', is really something to behold and is worth the purchase price alone in my book. An acoustically driven number about the band's snowblind years featuring a babeli-cious little honey who lives on 'rocket charms and coffee and crackerjack surprise'. As always, Tyler's vocal performance is unique and untouch-able whilst the chorus is an unrivalled piece of mastery: "She's the queen of my delusion - She's my zen from way back when - And because of my confusion - She's a face without a name..."

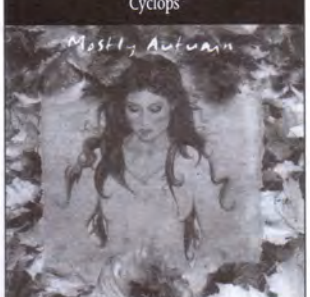
What's instantly apparent here is that Aerosmith are most definitely writing for them-selves these days and not to the dictates of some bloated corporate record company bull-shitters. Like a kid with the keys to the candy store, spin after spin delivers a deluge of delights guaran-teed to leave you craving for more and grinning like a fuckwit on carnival day! In my humble opinion...in fact, fuck humble, humble I am not! In my highly esteemed opinion, this is probably Aerosmith's finest offering since 'Rocks'. Drop dead gorgeous? You bet! Beyond beautiful? Most definitely! Listen to how the big boys do it...Just push play! You won't be disappointed. Fuckin' A!

• **PAUL DIAMOND**

STEVEN TYLER

DAVE WILLIS / IDOLS

MOSTLY AUTUMN
'The Last Bright Light'
Cyclops



Mostly Autumn is a (currently) seven-piece British band from Yorkshire whose stock is most certainly in the ascendancy. Having seen the band at the sell-out gig with Karnataka at the Classic Rock Society in Rotherham back in May, I can well understand why. I had already purchased this album ahead of the concert and became well acquainted with it by the time of the live experience, following which I had no hesitation in obtaining the two earlier works, 'For All We Shared...' and The Spirit of Autumn Past.

The nucleus of the band comprises Brian Josh (guitars, vocals), Heather Findlay (vocals, bodhran, tambourine and bells), Iain Jennings (keyboards, background vocals) and Liam Davidson (guitars, vocals). However, Angela Goldthorpe (flute, recorders, background vocals) has also appeared on all three albums, though credited only as an "additional musician" on the first of these. Andy Smith (bass) and Jonathan Blackmore (drums) complete the lineup on TLBL.

All three albums enthral the listener with a smörgåsbord of aural delights and I really must highlight the 9 + minute opus 'Heroes Never Die' and Pink Floyd style 'The Night Sky' that are featured on 'For All We Shared...' and the sumptuous 'Evergreen' and the epic 'The Gap is Too Wide' on 'The Spirit of Autumn Past'. I am a total fan of the haunting Uilleann pipes, and guest artist Troy Donockley of Iona turns in a stunning performance on this latter track. It would certainly be one of my choices for a 'Desert Island'!

One of the characteristic features of the three albums is that they are bound together in having a bridge between each pair. But there is also a natural progression, with TLBL perhaps marginally the rockiest of the three. This also features a much more assured and varied vocal performance from Heather Findlay - although, rather surprisingly - it is not her voice that is first heard on the album. Another important difference between TLBL and its two predecessors is the lack of violin, their violinist Bob Faulds having retired from the band. However, it is perhaps the use of a choir (the Christchurch Singers) on some of the tracks, that really increases the atmosphere on this album in comparison with its predecessors.

The album opens with the bridge '...Just Moving On' and this is followed by the (initially) rather pastoral 'We Come And We Go' with Brian Josh taking lead vocals. The listener who has not previously heard anything by the band will be immediately taken by the overt similarity in sound to certain Pink Floyd tracks. Indeed, this band is acknowledged as one of the major influences (though certainly not the only influence) upon Mostly Autumn. To these ears both Brian Josh's vocals and guitar playing contribute to an effect that is uncannily redolent of Pink Floyd, and I am reminded of 'Grantchester Meadows' by the twittering birdsong between 'We Come And We Go' and 'Half The Mountain' and between this and 'The Eyes of the Forest'. This latter song is where Heather Findlay's voice is first heard in a solo capacity. The mood created here is very placid, though the lyrics are especially acerbic!

The mood changes after this cycle of songs with their message about things not stay-

ing the same. 'The Dark Before The Dawn' is one of the heavier tracks - both musically and lyrically and this is followed by the beautiful song 'Hollow' (no, nothing to do with the Spice Girls!!) another sparkling Heather Findlay lead vocal. Brian Josh's soaring guitar comes in after four minutes and it is dynamics like this that really make this CD such a powerful and surprising release. It is back to Brian Josh's vocals for 'Prints in the Stone' but Heather soon joins him harmoniously. This is another of the gentler, shall we say 'more pastoral' tracks with the low whistles of Troy Donockley (who is once again a guest musician) helping to create the appropriate atmosphere. The mellow feel is continued into the opening section of the title track, but the sound is soon enhanced by a Gregorian chant, which in turn leads into the up-tempo plea 'I'd rather put life in your heart than money in your hand'. This is an especially emotional Brian Josh song that relates to an unforgettable encounter he had with a down and out in London. The eight minutes of this song are also an emotional roller-coaster for the listener. Superb, spine-tingling stuff!

'Never The Rainbow' is a short interlude between two of the longer tracks on the album. This features a Hammond Organ tour de force from Iain Jennings, and more tremendous lead vocals from Heather - showing a much rockier side. Another real gem! But they keep on coming, 'Shrinking Violet' again features Heather's vocals - here in more melancholic style, and reminiscent in places of Julianne Regan. Angela Goldthorpe also sings harmony vocals on this track and this enhances the overall effect. Two instrumentals (the multi-faceted 'Helms Deep' and shorter, more focused 'Which Wood?') follow and provide an emotional break before the climactic 12-minute 'Mother Nature' closes the album.

This is one hell of a good record, and if what I have written above draws you in, don't be afraid to buy it. Mostly Autumn is another British band that deserves all the success and reputation it is gaining.

• Paul Jerome Smith

Fried Alive!

BONFIRE
'Strike X'
BMG

THE APTLY titled 'Strike X' is the tenth offering from Teutonic rockers Bonfire during a career which could best be described as undulating. *From the heady days of the late 80's to the lean days of the mid 90's and the current resurgence of fortune during the last few years Bonfire, despite the various line up changes and the odd dodgy album, have always been to the forefront of hard rock. 'Fuel to the Flames' was a big, big album for the band on which they showed the whole world they were capable of recapturing the glory days...and how!*

And so now, two years later, here is the follow up. Opening with the spoken 'Revelation Day' is a little strange, especially for a band who normally pride themselves on bombastic kick off tracks. This in turn segues into 'Under Blue Skies' which apart from being a broody, moody, heavy son of a bitch, is a song with a deep subject matter; "Who'll be a Nazi, who'll be a Jew? Who'll be white man, who'll die like a Sioux?" asks vocalist Chris Lessmann, reminding us we're all the same under God's eyes. Certainly thought provoking stuff, although track two 'Strike Back' is more like it - big beefy riff and Lessmann taking us into far more familiar territory when Bonfire used to write songs like this just for fun.

'Down to Atlanta' carries on the bands love affair with the good 'ol south. Last time out it was a cover version of 'Sweet Home Alabama' and here we have another tribute to the fair ladies of Georgia, or one in particular who serves the liquor at Froggy's....a feel good song, throwaway lyrics and a whole pile of fun. 'Southern Winds' is a rather bland and unexciting ballad which at times sounds like Ronan Keating with a few choice heavy guitars thrown in for good measure! Jesus, this one is painful....next! 'Good Time Rock and Roll' is Bonfire doing Bonfire doing AC/DC...a big stomping rocker which although is so heavily cliché that you will find yourself giggling beyond belief, is a catchy tune and will no doubt go straight into the live set. 'Until the Last Goodbye' falls somewhere between a ballad and a rocker, however when it's this good I'm sure nobody will care. Big traditional Bonfire guitars, and Lessmann spitting out the chorus as only he can do - another for the live set and a very, very cool song.

Next up is 'Diamonds in the Rough' and Bam Bam and Uwe lay down the backbeat, more frantic riffing, a killer solo and we're into foot on the monitor territory...Bonfire at their fastest, heaviest and best for years. 'Damn You' comes across with a Whitesnake circa '1987' feel, atmospheric semi-acoustic guitar intro, nice keyboards adding a little colour to the chorus and again Lessmann in top form as he screams "Damn You, I don't want it no more. Damn you, It's over, Damn you, don't knock on my door" and somehow you actually believe the guy. 'Anytime You Cry' is an immense melodic hard rock song by anyone's standards, with a rampaging bass line and thunderous drums providing an impressive back round for everybody to strut their stuff - and how! This could have easily come off 'Point Blank' or 'Fireworks'. Okay, it's a little less riff orientated but has a lingering melody and ridiculously singable chorus, definitely the best thing they have done in years.

'Too Much Hollywood' kind of undoes a lot of the hard work, being an almost Beastie Boys gang rap verse which is pretty terrible, although the chorus is big. In fact the 'whoa whoa' in the chorus almost redeems the song but to be honest it would be so much better without the modern influence...leave it to Aerosmith, Tyler does it much, much better. Last track 'I Need You' features Claus Lessmann singing a simple, honest love song, accompanied by an acoustic guitar and some keyboard induced strings. It is a beautifully simple song with lyrics that at some time even the most hard hearted among us must have contemplated.

The 'bonus' track 'Angel in White' I'm guessing is a demo because the production is awful, the drums sound like they are coming from the bottom of a barrel and the mix is all over the place. However the song itself is a storming romp - classic Bonfire, up tempo in your face riff rock like nobody else can do. I really would love to hear a properly finished version of this as it would be a killer.

Overall this album doesn't begin in earnest until track 6, the opening numbers being too removed from what we normally would expect of Bonfire, but from six to thirteen, with the possible exception of 'Too Much Hollywood', they are back on form in a big way. As a follow up to 'Fuel to the Flames' I was a little disappointed, however on repeated listens the album has become a more familiar friend. It is after all Bonfire, but just being a little different. Ten down, here's to number eleven.

• Kieran Dargon

JAIME KYLE
"Untangled'
Independent

It's been a long time since we saw a completely new album from Jaime Kyle, one of Nashville's most beautiful and talented song writers. The 'Best of My Heart' compilation had a few unreleased tracks, but 'Back From Hollywood' in 1996 was the last fully new album. Now, after a five year gap, comes 'Untangled'. Now first of, let's get one thing clear - this is not a rock album. Jaime has always ranged the full spectrum of rock, from the sheer adrenaline rush of 'Bombs Away' to the more personal and introspective songs such as 'Understanding' and 'Where Was I'. And the latter is more the style we see here.

'Untangled' is an album that Jaime had to make...overcoming her personal demons an exorcising old ghosts. The honesty and passion bleeds from every note. Jaime doesn't as much wear her heart on her sleeve as sing it from every fibre of her soul. From 'It's Not You' comes the wonderful opening lines: "I gave up on Cinderella a long time ago - I'm still looking for just one good man - I don't wanna hold my heart back behind a wall of glass - And with you I let the dice roll from my hand..."

The album sees Jaime coming out of the dark places that haunted her life. I used to chastise her for writing such sad songs. "Write happy songs" I'd tell her, to which she'd reply she had to write what she felt. Well, this album is about transformation, about moving on and letting go. About passing through the sadness and finding the answers. About rediscovering your confidence and being happy.

There are quite a few uptempo tracks as well, with 'Simplify', 'Revelation' and the wonderful 'Long Winter' being particularly of note. The latter especially, I'd love to hear rocked up to its full potential. But for the most part, this is a showcase for the voice of one of the most passionate singers around: new country with emotion and attitude. Beauty with inspiration, talent and courage.

For those wanting more of Jaime's more hard rocking output, don't fret. Her next album will be hard rocking, and she is already writing with her Nashville neighbour, Mitch Malloy. Can't wait! In the meantime, you can get your hands on 'Untangled' from www.jaimekyle.com.

• Bruce Mee

CHALICE
'Digital Boulevard'
Eagle Rock

Third outing for German hard rockers Chalice, 'Digital Boulevard' sees quite a progression from their last outing (98's 'Persistence Of Time'), not least in terms of songwriting. To put it simply, Chalice seem to have at last come of age, the at times naïve enthusiasm of the past now all but replaced by a sleeker, more sophisticated hard rock sound filled with thoughtful arrangements and tasteful musical interludes. If you think that sounds like a recipe for a progressive band you could be right, although Chalice don't really fit into the same category as most of the metal acts on the European circuit right now, their sound has it's roots in a more traditionally British hard rock style.

That said,, there's also a definite Rush vibe going on here too, again something that was never really all that noticeable in the past. A talented guitar / keyboard five piece, the most immediately noticeable thing about Chalice to the uninitiated would have to be the higher register vocals of Gino Naschke. Cut from the same cloth as Axxis man Bernhard Weiss or that guy who used to front Domain, Nashke frankly wipes the floor with the pair of 'em, his voice always clear and refined, never degenerating into that familiar nasal whine that used to really grate on the old nerve endings.

Weiss however isn't the only selling point for Chalice, the clever musical exchanges between guitarist Oliver Scheer and keyboard man Ralf Muller are also well worth a listen - the former providing some cutting riffs and crisp solos, whilst the latter's slightly old fashioned sound adds a sort of decadent ambience to the whole thing.

From a songwriting point of view, Chalice still aren't premier league material just yet, but their undoubted spark of potential seems to be getting stronger with each release, their ambitions also growing in line with their increasing confidence and maturity. Mixing some good melody ideas with subtle, yet stretching musical arrangements, they've created a predominantly mid tempo batch of songs which should have something to offer the more cerebrally stimulated listeners out there. Tracks such as the lengthy pair 'Seven Seas' or 'A Day For Revolution', rubbing shoulders with shorter, yet equally challenging tracks like 'Two Worlds Collide', 'Forever Strangers', or the refreshingly acoustic driven 'Hold On To The Years' (given the right push, this could have hit single written all over it). Occasionally though, the band do like to work up a bit of a sweat as on catchy title track 'Digital Boulevard' which opens the album, or the brooding 'The Mirror'.

Chalice are a great little band, and 'Digital Boulevard' sees them continue to grow in stature. Not essential by any means, but if you have a few quid left over from the excesses of your summer hols, this might very well surprise you.

• Dave Cockett

TEMPEST
'Balance'
Magna Carta

An immense variety of CD releases have been presented to this reviewer's ears for the present issue of Fireworks. Well what we have here is the latest release from "the world's only band that seamlessly merges relentless rock rhythms, Irish jigs and reels, Norwegian traditional music, Scottish ballads and inventive, original compositions focusing on mythology and history". And I reckon that this quote from the band's biography sums them up very precisely!

My earliest encounter with Tempest was an impulse purchase in 1996 and, coinciden-

tally, their first Magna Carta release 'Turn Of The Wheel'. Prior to this they had released four CDs on various independent labels. My money was not wasted, indeed I was very pleasantly surprised by the most enjoyable mixture of folk/rock sounds - admittedly some of them a wee bit left of centre - that 'TOTW' contained. I suppose I pigeonholed the band as a sort of (latter day) Fairport Convention mixed with Jethro Tull, but with the addition of a Norwegian traditionally-based track, 'Bonden og Kråka'.

Fast forward five years and this latest release has a similar sort of variety including three instrumentals and three traditional songs (from Scotland: 'Captain Ward', Ireland: 'Two Sisters' - my favourite on the album - and from Norway 'Villemann'). However, the music now sounds very much more intense, and truthfully it has not had the immediate impact upon me that 'TOTW 'did. Don't get me wrong, if you like (or think you like) this sort of mixture, do try to give it a listen, because it is a finely crafted work. I suppose that what is happened is that Tempest has now produced an album which is more their own distinctive sound. Of course, this may also be due in no small measure to the fact that only vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Lief Sorbye and drummer Adolfo Lazo remain from the lineup that recorded 'TOTW'.

As with the previous Magna Carta releases by the band, Robert Berry has handled production duties as well as providing keyboards and harmony vocals.

• PAUL JEROME SMITH

LIONS SHARE
'Entrance'
Massacre Records

Originally formed back in the mid 80's (an early incarnation even cutting the much sought after 'Ghost Town Queen' single), Swedish melodic rock/metal act Lions Share split at the dawn of the grunge laden 90's, only to resurface again a few years later with a completely revamped line up. It was with this new line up that the band cut their surprisingly strong 'Lions Share' debut back in '94, a great album which combined the catchy hooks of AOR with a slightly darker, more progressive edge. Winning plenty of praise, the band signed with Century Media for the imaginatively titled follow up 'Two', although it's aggressive, angst ridden stance, and extreme melodies were seen by many as a definite step backwards. (In many respects 'Two' was a totally misunderstood album, drawing striking parallels with the similarly maligned 'Messiah Complex' from Eyewitness.)

Having retired to lick their wounds and consider their future, Lions Share hit back in the most surprisingly effective way imaginable by releasing the monster 'Fall From Grace' album - how that release failed to break on a massive scale, I'll never know. Still undaunted however, the band are back once again with their fourth full length effort 'Entrance', as keen as ever to take their music to the people, if only somebody would give them the opportunity.

Initially, the omens didn't bode too well for 'Entrance', for not only had the band lost keyboard player and co-founder Kay Backlund (bad enough in it's own right for a player and writer of his proven abilities), but vocal powerhouse Andy Engberg had also sailed off into the sunset. The loss of Engberg could have really spelt potential disaster for the band as his turbo charged, dynamic vocals were one of the pivotal lynchpins in the Lions Share attack. Fortunately though, his replacement Tony Niva seems to be a real a find (slightly higher register but with real power and range), and with both Mats Olausson and Tommy Denander filling in on keyboards for the departed Backlund, 'Entrance' is pretty much business as usual as far as Lions Share are concerned.

A little more varied in terms of pace and content than it's predecessor, 'Entrance' seems to be pitched somewhere between the debut and 'Fall From Grace', with subtler, more considered cuts like the ballad 'Lost', placed alongside the pulsating melodic metal of tracks such as opener 'Shotgun Messiah' ('Scream' era Pretty Maids fans will go nuts over this one, and it comes complete with some great, spiralling solos from guitarist Lars Chriss to boot). Longest cut on offer is the six minute epic 'Believe', an emotional roller coaster ride that seems to scale the dizzying heights one minute, then hit rock bottom the next. 'Waiting' has a slightly neo-classical feel to it (Priest meets Malmsteen maybe), 'War Machine' is the darkest, most overtly modern sounding cut on offer, 'Mystery' evokes vague memories of Dio when he was relevant (yet strangely, it's not a cover version of the Dio track), whilst the album is brought to a suitably chaotic finale with the driving rock anthem 'Free Your Mind'.

Progression wise, 'Entrance' isn't the same bold step forwards from 'Fall From Grace' that it in turn was from 'Two', yet I didn't really expect it to be. I'm still not sure that it actually tops 'Fall From Grace' in the songwriting stakes either, but if not it certainly runs it a close second.

• DAVE COCKETT

NIKOLO KOTZEV
'Nostradamus'
SPV

Having stuck disc one of this double CD set into your Hi-Fi and hit playback, you could be forgiven for thinking you'd hit the radio button and got Classic FM by mistake, such is the striking initial impression created by opening track 'Overture'. Indeed, it's not until the guitars kick in near the end of this three minute instrumental soirée that you're actually convinced this is a rock album after all. Some four years in the making, and subject to a seemingly interminable series of delays, 'Nostradamus' is the much anticipated force majeure from former Baltimore guitarist Nikolo Kotzev, better known of course for three sizzling albums with his own band project Brazen Abbot.

The first thing you should realise is that 'Nostradamus' bears very little relation (apart from the odd superficial riff or chord sequence here and there) to Brazen Abbot, being light years away in terms of breadth and complexity. Based on the heretical life of French prophet Michel De Nostredame (Nostradamus) and his extraordinary gift which constantly brought him into conflict with both Church and State, this is a breathtakingly ambitious rock opera project the likes of which haven't been seen since ... well, ever actually. Featuring the services of a full blown symphony orchestra, as well as rhythm and keyboards from former Europe trio Mic Michaeli, John Leven and Ian Haugland, the musical icing on the cake is the guitar (and in some cases violin) of Kotzev himself.

However, what will no doubt cause the most excitement, at least as far as the rock press is concerned, is the superlative cast of vocalists that Kotzev has assembled to play various characters in the story. From the top down then we have Joe Lynn Turner who plays Nostradamus himself, ably supported by the likes of Glenn Hughes, Goran Edman, Jorn Lande, Doogie White, Sass Jordan and Alannah Myles! Impressed? ... you damn well should be, when was the last time such an impressive cast was seen on the same continent, let alone in the same studio!

With a strong, heavily orchestrated undercurrent running throughout, this is going to strike people in one of either two ways. There'll be those who proclaim it as just the latest proof that two such seemingly disparate style should be kept apart at all costs, whilst others will wholeheartedly embrace it as the future blue print for all subsequent rock operas. Personally, I've never been that much of a fan of the genre, but the recent Avantasia opus and now this meisterwerk are forcing a somewhat radical rethink on that score - music as classy and well constructed as that on 'Nostradamus' just will not be ignored.

Heart Attack!

Soul Doctor
'Soul Doctor'
Massacre Records

NOBODY WAS more surprised than I when Tommy Heart announced his departure from Fair Warning last summer. *They seemed to have it all, each album selling in excess of 100,000 copies in Japan alone, sellout tours and above all financial security, a major factor in any bands existence in this day and age. Some twelve months later Tommy is back with his new outfit Soul Doctor and is joined by ex Bonfire bassist Joerg Deisinger, guitarist Chris Lyne and drummer Zacky.*

Gone are the trademark FW harmonies and neat guitars of later FW albums only to be replaced with a grittier, dirtier feel of a real rock and roll band. The opening broadside of 'Soul Doctor' (a Mick Jones/Lou Gramm track), 'Shake 'em on Down' and 'Goodbye' is like a massive adrenaline injection to the very heart of rock and roll. All three tracks are massive slabs of melodic hard rock heaven bringing to mind a wonderful amalgam of Thunder, Bonfire and debut era Fair Warning. 'Before the Night is Over' is a wonderfully simple song with a clever keyboard over a solid beat giving Tommy the space to colour in the gaps as this Bad Company style belter builds into a very tight bluesy romp with guitarist Chris Lyne ripping his fretboard to pieces with a great solo. 'Unspoken Words' is another slowburner, the guitar riff reminiscent of a certain Mr Blackmore. Indeed the entire song obviously influenced by early Rainbow, nothing wrong with that though, especially when the songs are delivered this well. 'What Do You Want' and 'Who Will Be There' maintain the high standard of songwriting and musicianship and sees the guys stay in uptempo mode pumping out more quality hard rock.

'You're All That I Want' is a mid paced number, relying on a mouth organ and Hammond intro to announce the arrival of the nearest thing to a ballad on the album. 'Down the Boulevard' is back into rocking mode, heavily clichéd lyrics and pulsating beat make this one of the most commercial moments on the album. Sure, you have heard it zillions of times before but here we have four guys playing it for fun and guess what...it shows! 'Emotion in Motion' is another monster...slamming drums, chugging guitar and Tommy telling us all a tale of lost love. 'Does It Feel Like Love' closes the album and what a belter it is, possibly the best track on the album. Another powerhouse containing a guitar solo which will induce everybody to get out that trusty 'ol air guitar. On this, the Japanese version, the bonus track is 'Wild and on the Run', a gentle piano-based ballad building into an almost Journeyesque monster (check out that guitar between the bridge and chorus and ask yourself if you have heard it before) showing the band can pen a good tune and not rely on a Marshall stack to get the message across.

They say a debut album by any band lets the influences shine through and this is no exception but make no mistake, this band are no rip off artists. What is up for grabs here is a superb hard rock album, littered with influences such as Rainbow, Bad Company, Thunder, AC/DC, Bonfire and early Fair Warning while managing to carry it all off with a style and panache of their own. A superb album!

• KIERAN DARGON

Such is the depth and diversity of the 20 odd songs/musical passages on offer here that I'm not even going to begin to try and describe it. Technically speaking it's beyond reproach, and all the vocalists turn in some suitably impassioned performances, rising magnificently to the unique challenges of the occasion (save for one dodgy vocal from Jorn Lande where the track in question doesn't really suit his vocal style). As a confirmed Glenn Hughes fan, the likes of 'Pieces Of A Dream' and 'Caught Up In A Rush' will always be high on my priority list, but there's just so many breathtaking tracks on offer - the emotive duet 'Try To Live Again' between Myles and Turner just one of a myriad to chose from.

It probably won't be to everybody's tastes, but if you're after hard rock with a sense of adventure then 'Nostradamus' will prove to be a sensation.

• DAVE COCKETT

PETE SANDENBERG'S JADE
'Origin'
Point Music

Pete Sandberg is somewhat of a musical chameleon, varying his output from AOR to hard rock and all points in between. This, his second offering from his Jade project, once again differs from the heavily Deep Purple influenced debut and has gone for a far more AOR influenced sound, with lots of melody, nice keys, beefy guitars and memorable choruses. 'Northern Lights' is a nice bouncy number, comparable in parts to classic Magnum, especially the keyboard fills but it has a far more commercial sound than Clarkin and company. A good song, and so far so good. 'Time' is prime time Alien, a succulent double tracked vocal, stabbing keys and guitar reminiscent of the wonderful 'Shiftin' Gear' album, and lo and behold on checking the sleeve notes the track is co written by the one and only Jim Jihed, the original Alien vocalist - a superb number. 'No Way Out' is Pete being different again, a ballad with mid 70's feel keys and a nice vocal line - a very cool song. 'Love in Vain' is another semi acoustic ballad, though not necessarily AOR, more of a singer/songwriter vibe to this, which is still none the less a nice laid back track for lazy day listening. 'Power of Gold' is back to uptempo Scandi rock, again keys to the forefront, guitars nicely positioned in the immediate background, and while neither a stomper or a ballad is another storming track with a touch of Glenn Hughes vibe to it. The remainder of the album is filled with similarly high quality numbers; the powerfully heavy 'Where There is a Will', the big fm radio feel of 'Time and Again', 'Can't Stop Lov-

ing You' and 'Alone', and the stomping 'All in Disguise' punctuated only by another emotive ballad, 'Nights in Mexico', which is an atmospheric masterpiece if ever there was one. The title of the album, 'Origin', suggests that Pete is revisiting his musical beginnings and his first brush with success, which of course was with Alien. There is a lot here that will be familiar to Alien fans, and to those that may not yet have heard Pete Sandber , this represents the ideal opportunity to sample the mans unique ability to come up with amazing music time and time again. This album is one of the nicest surprises of the year so far. Musically, yes it's been heard before, but it hasn't been done this well in a long, long time. Highly Recommended.

• KIERAN DARGON

Unbelievable!

DARE
'Belief'
Legend Records

IN EARLY '99 Darren was quoted as saying just after the release of 'Calm before the Storm' that 'Belief' would be out before the end of said same year - good job we weren't holding our collective breath as finally the album sees the light of day some two years later. *Four albums in a thirteen year career isn't exactly overly productive, however when you consider the end product of previous releases then a certain amount of forgiveness can be afforded to Mr. Wharton and company.*

'Belief' is one of those albums that I will never be sure about. Now before anybody jumps down my throat as I'm not dismissing this album. On the contrary I love it to pieces, however I do wonder if the died in the wool Dare fans will do likewise? 'Out of the Silence' was by anybody's standards a classic AOR album, choc full of rousing anthems and sultry ballads wonderfully blended together to create a sonic tapestry seldom equalled. 'Blood from Stone' saw the band move in a much heavier direction, albeit at the behest of an impatient record company, pushing for a hit in the Europe/ Whitesnake dominated marketplace, while following a seven year hiatus 'Calm before the Storm' finally emerged as Darren then described it as "his vision of Dare". 'CBTS' took many elements of the first two albums but was an altogether more acoustic based album full to the brim with classic Dare hooks, oodles of melody and quality musicianship but to be honest was lacking a little in the power department. 'Belief' takes the Dare sound even further away from previous albums. Gone are the big guitars and thunderous backline to be replaced with acoustics and heavily atmospheric keyboards as the band carve out a new niche for themselves playing a brand of AOR that they have surely invented the patent for.

Darren's tenure in Thin Lizzy has obviously rubbed off on him such is the extent of the Celtic influence on show here. 'Silent Thunder', which some may be familiar with from the recent MTM records sampler, kicks off proceedings: haunting keyboard intro as a traditional Irish flute and tin whistle ushering in the entire band into a soulfully magnificent number, Darren's unmistakable vocal double and triple tracked to great effect, the traditional Irish fiddle further cementing the new direction being taken by the band.....great song though. The traditional Irish influence is also blatently obvious on 'Dreams on Fire', the tin whistle providing neat touches of colour in what proves to be one of the best songs on the album. Title track 'Belief' is as close as we get to 'classic' Dare, swaying acoustic guitar driving the song along nicely, and some wonderful backing vocals by a hitherto unnamed young lady. A definate highlight of the album. 'Run wild run Free' picks the pace up a little the electric guitars forcing the tempo, the rhythm section finally getting a chance to stretch the fingers with a cool shuffle backbeat over which the Bruce Hornsby piano brings the track to a delicate finale. 'We were Friends' with it's uileann pipe intro quickly copied by Richard Dews beautiful guitar leads us into a simple, soulful heartfelt ballad the likes of which only Darren can deliver, those rich tones perfectly highlighted again by Dews subtle fretwork. 'Falling' picks the pace up, vocal harmonies all over the place, in what can best be described as a very Don Henley influenced track given the once over by the boys, not to mention Mr Dews exquisite guitar (again, this guy is really good!!) and Darren's best vocal performance on the album. 'Where Will You Run', a traditional Dare stomper given a nice modern touch (and I promise I won't mention how good a guitar player Richard Dews is again) guaranteed to keep the old school happy and giving newer fans a brief snatch of how songs like this should be done. 'Take me Away' I'm afraid isn't on the same par as the rest of the album and tends to be a little boring, perhaps it's one of the tracks that Mr Wharton wasn't sure about - musically excellent, vocally excellent but sadly, and how can I put this ...boring. 'Promised Land' flits between ballad and rocker, nicely entwining atmospherics and some serious guitar into what can only be described as another classic Dare romp. 'Phoenix', brings things to a close on a little bit of a downer, a tearful subject matter beautifully executed but is a tad weak as a closing number - better off with a rocker to leave a more lasting impression.

It is plain to see Darren is taking Dare in a lighter direction, obviously happiest creating celtic influenced and deeply atmospheric music carefully thoughtout, well written and executed magnificently by some very talented musicians, rather than giving us an album of guitar oriented AOR anthems, which I will be the first to admit I miss desperately. I personally love this album. However being Irish I grew up listening to celtic inspired music on tin whistles, uileann pipes et al. I wonder if long standing fans will as readily accept the diversification. For those hoping for a 'Nothing Stronger Than Love' or an 'Abandon', I'm afraid to say you will be disappointed . The direction taken on this album shows the band in a far more mature frame of mind, making a musical progression something akin to the one Gotthard made in recent years.

All in all, this is a very, very good album. It's undeniably Dare but perhaps a few years older and a few years wiser, making music that they themselves wish to make, not an album they were forced into making to maintain their legacy of one of the finest, if not the finest UK AOR band ever.

• KIERAN DARGAN

WISDOM CALL
'Wisdom Call'
Massacre Records

Like the truly wonderful Adagio release reviewed elsewhere this issue, Wisdom Call are yet another side project band, this one being put together to showcase the not inconsiderable talents of Christian Liljegren, frontman with Swedish power metal troupe Narnia. Joining Liljegren are Narnia colleague Andreas Johansson (drums) and erstwhile Stormwind members Per Hallman (keyboards), and Andreas Olsson (bass). Strangely, given the prominence of the guitars in this particular style of music (of which more in a moment), guitarists Fredrik Aberg and Stefan Olsson don't appear to have any previous form of note (or not any a brief search on the web revealed anyway), so their contributions are all the more surprising.

Given that this is being pushed on Liljegren's name alone, there are bound to be parallels in style with his main band (brooding guitar runs, pacey rhythms, and moody vocals, etc.), although I found it a little more straightforward and less intense, particularly as both Aberg and Olsson have more of a traditionally European guitar sound when compared to the Malmsteen influenced licks of Narnia's Carljohan Grimmark. Closest comparison I could think of after a period of reflection over the past couple of weeks was Narnia infused with classic Priest, then overlaid with both Europe and Pretty Maids influences.

Straight out of the box then and Wisdom Call come out fighting with the moody, swaggering 'Power From The Sky' - very Lions Share to be honest. Ahh but wait a minute, Lions Share man Lars Chriss actually wrote the music, so no real surprises there then. Turns out that second track 'The Lost Generation' is another Chriss / Liljegren collaboration, although this has more of a Malice undercurrent (think 'Sinister Double') to it, despite the rather weak bass sound (something that's not particularly impressive throughout to be honest).

From here on in, save for a brooding cover of the Europe classic 'Wings Of Tomorrow', the songwriting is kept more in house, although the unrelenting 'I Believe' puts the band firmly back in Lions Share territory once again. 'Never Surrender' is perhaps the closest they get to the iridescent power metal of Narnia, whilst 'One Way Out' has a slightly pompous, overblown feel which nods towards early Europe. There's also a couple of fairly solid ballads in the shape of 'Hold On To The Truth' and 'Through Fire', the latter a duet with female vocalist Berit Kulberg.

Anyone familiar with Liljegren's history prior to joining Narnia will perhaps recall his former band Modest Attraction, and it's with a couple of old Modest Attraction tracks that the album draws to a close (remixed as opposed to re-recorded). Markedly different in style, both '15 Years' and 'Time' bear more relation to Deep Purple or Black Sabbath than Helloween, although for anyone who hasn't heard them before, they're actually pretty good.

One of the better new project releases of late, 'Wisdom Call' should appeal to a broad cross section of melodic hard rock / metal fans, and whilst it's by no means deserving of classic status, it can still hold its head high in all but the most illustrious of company.

• DAVE COCKETT

MELODICA
'Love Metal'
Now & Then/Frontiers

Even while 'Long Way From Home' took a pasting from fans and critics last year, Ted and Gerhard remained upbeat, beavering away on the demos for their new album which would eventually become 'Lovemetal'. When I spoke with Ted just after the release of 'LWFH' it was difficult to keep the conversation on that album because basically all he wanted to talk about was 'Lovemetal', and upon hearing it I have to admit his confidence was amply justified.

The biggest difference this time round is familiarity. Ted and Gerhard have gotten to know each other and the music is reflecting that, a confidence emanating from both of them as can be seen in the lead off song 'Summer Nights'. This is a song, as the chorus suggests, written for cruising down the highway, hood down, stereo up and your girl beside you. Sublime guitar work from Gerhard, reminiscent in places of Tony Bruno's contribution to 'Don't walk Away' from the self titled Danger Danger album, that beautiful, echoing riff adding a fantastic vibe to the song, and of course Ted's ever familiar vocals putting the veritable icing on the cake....wonderful. 'Head Over Heels' is another cool track, punctuated with some intricate piano, up tempo for the most part as Ted asks why he always falls head over heels, and just get a listen to Gerhard's solo in the middle - can the boy play or what? He simply shreds, and Ted does alright too, singing his bollocks off as only HE can do. Nobody will dare ask questions of him this time round.

'Lovemetal', the title track is another slice of superb radio rock, and if this was 1990 this would be all over rock radio like a rash. Oh, and to all those who criticised the album title, I dare you not to sing along to the chorus which is so infectious it should carry a health warning. Track four is always the ballad, right? So here we are, 'Broken Promises' being another very solid track with Ted's vocal suiting perfectly and Gerhard ripping out a very tasty solo indeed. The backing vox are excellent also, adding a very nice touch to the song. 'I'll Never Break Your Heart' is vintage Poley D2 era - in fact I have never heard Ted sing better in his life. The girls on backing vocals really add character to the song and Ted really goes for it...definatley one of the best things Ted has ever recorded. Existing fans will be ecstatic, yes it is that good. 'Out of My Mind' is a rather broody number, built on the back of a somewhat basic riff but again Ted's lead and the backing vocal make the song, but to be fair Gerhard is no slouch either and again comes up with the goods in the shape of a killer solo. 'Shake' is an uptempo romp possessing a neat chorus and Ted singing in a slightly lower registrar than normal, which works really well. 'Crazy' crashes in on the back of a Ted scream and is definitely a feel good number, Gerhard hammering out the riffs and colourful use of keyboards leading into the chorus which sees Ted trading off vocals with TNT's Tony Harnell, Ted singing the chorus and Tony going into the stratosphere while taking care of seconds...this is wonderful, a fantastic song with great vocal performances from Ted and Tony Harnell, each pushing themselves to the very limit with the song the only beneficiary...one of the vocal performances of the year so far. 'Keep on Running' and 'What Number Are You', which got its first public airing at last years Gods festival keep the pace up right to the end, before the album closes with the excellent instrumental 'Gotta Save Yourself' which finally gives Gerhard the chance to shine as he slips into guitar hero mode calmly displaying a feat of fretboard histrionics, at all times playing for the song and not throwing in licks just because he can. This time round the guys have made sure that nothing is left open to scrutiny - the production is nice and big, the band are very tight, Gerhard has completed his transformation from side man to partner and his performance is thoroughly

excellent throughout. Ted has worked his ass of in the vocal department and he is sounding better now than he has done in years. In fact I would say that it's his best post Danger Danger vocal performance, period! Everything is nailed to perfection and he has even added an extra dimension to his voice this time out....feel.

To those that bought 'LWFH' last year and were disappointed I can honestly tell you that on hearing 'Lovemetal' you will struggle to believe that it's even the same band such is the improvement. 'Lovemetal' is without doubt a very strong contender for album of the year, this time for all the right reasons. Buy or die. Da man is back and you'd better believe it!

• KIERAN DARGON

SNAKES IN PARADISE
'Yesterday And Today'
MTM Music

Unquestionably one of the better bands to emerge from the hotbed of creativity that is the Swedish scene, Snakes In Paradise left their last label Z Records in somewhat acrimonious circumstances after just one studio album, 98's rather good 'Garden Of Eden'. Almost immediately snapped up by those enterprising chaps at MTM, their first release 'Yesterday And Today' is, like the recent Jaded Heart album 'Dairy 1999-2000' a retrospective 'Best Of ..'. Long-standing fans of the band will probably already own the vast majority of this material as there's only one previously unreleased track ('Trail Back Home'). However, for those who only really picked up on the band from 'Garden Of Eden', this is a veritable treasure trove of long since deleted songs.

Starting life in the early 90's as a punchy, hard edged AOR band, Snakes In Paradise first released a four track EP entitled 'Love Got Wings', none of the tracks making it onto their self titled debut release (at least not my copy at any rate). Over the years, this EP has becoming something of a collectors item, copies changing hands at quite a premium. Well, the good news for anyone who's sought out a copy in vain is that all four tracks are included here. Pick of the bunch is undoubtedly the swaggering, Whitesnake styled 'Play With Fire' (arguably ranking amongst the best things they've ever done), although the gloriously hooky power ballad 'How Can You Say' runs it a close second. If you haven't heard these four tracks before, they alone make 'Yesterday And Today' an essential purchase.

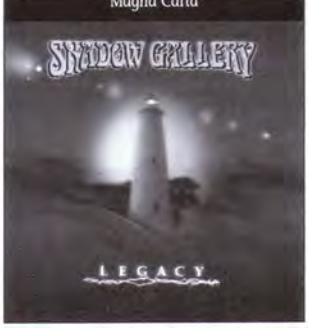
Building on the success of that first EP, the band were soon back in the studio recording their self titled debut. Again, this is still quite a sought after release amongst collectors, so the inclusion of no less than five tracks should at least go some way towards placating those who missed out. Kicking off with the bright and breezy 'Book Of My Life' (this being the remixed single version from 1995), the band offer up the brooding 'Deep In Your Heart' (again with plenty of Whitesnake references), another sizzling ballad 'When The Dream Is Gone', the swaying 'Rewrite The Story', and the bouncy, Red Dawnish 'Fly Away'. Slightly more polished than the debut EP, 'Snakes In Paradise' was a classic of it's time, and the fact that these tracks still sound so fresh after seven years is fitting testament to it's timeless qualities.

All of which brings us nicely up to date with 98's 'Garden Of Eden' opus, from which no less than six tracks are featured, although in my book 'Seventh Wonder' seems conspicuous by its absence. 'Garden Of Eden' saw a toughening up of the Snakes In Paradise sound, giving them a swaggering, sort of bluesy edge which drew them many comparisons to Whitesnake. No doubt most of you will already be familiar with the charms of tracks such as 'Hard Day Long', 'Gypsy In Your Blood', 'Vagabond' and 'Child Of Yesterday' so I guess they need no introduction from me. Suffice to say, if you haven't crossed paths with these songs before then you're probably reading the wrong magazine! Finally, the aforementioned unreleased track 'Trail Back Home' is a smouldering ballad which more than matches anything else on the album.

As an introduction to the delights of Snakes In Paradise, 'Yesterday And Today' is an essential purchase.

• DAVE COCKETT

SHADOW GALLERY
'Legacy'
Magna Carta



After the excellent 'Tyranny' album of a couple of years ago the initial buzz for this release suggested it would be a masterpiece, and although this is just as strong, if not stronger than the last one, there are still one or two reservations I have about the band, but I'll come to those later.

Whilst a lot of the genre is shortening their songs in an effort to make them more acceptable to the non-epic brigade, one look at the length of the 6 songs on offer reassured me that for these guys it's business as usual.

Opening with the 13 minute 'Cliffhanger 2' (the latest in a movie-like sequel trend started by Kansas & Dream Theater), the piece is actually two separate tunes and is listed as such. The first part, 'Hang On', is a pretty straight-forward song which starts with atmospheric guitar-picking and keyboards before turning into a slow stop-start riff with singer Mike Baker spitting out the words. It's actually pretty angry stuff for them, with a stirring chorus and a great drum sound, in fact Joe Nevolo's performance throughout is one of the highlights. The other half of the piece is a frantic instrumental called 'The Crusher', which at times is not only technically brilliant, but also has some great melodic solos. At other times however it doesn't seem to flow, and the manic soloing from guitarists Gary Wehrkamp and Brendt Allman, and the keyboard solos of (I presume) Chris Ingles come across like early Shrapnel/Roadrunner guitar albums by Tony MacAlpine or Vinny Moore. Not that I mind such things (the label IS co-run by Mike Varney), it's just that it all sounds so familiar, and when I say I presume it was Chris Ingles on keys, Wehrkamp also plays some keys and bass on this album, as well as writing 90% of the music.

After the epic opener the next four songs all clock in around the 5 or 7 minute mark, starting with the excellent 'Destination Unknown' which has a piano intro, lots of harmony vocals and an awesome keyboard solo. It's many changes of pace and tempo are interlaced with some wonderful piano and Mike Baker's expressive voice.

If you thought that was good, the ensuing 'Colors' is even better. It's pretty light with some great vocals but when the backing vocals come in it really takes off. Tons of melody and a great stirring feel make it a real lump-in-the-throat stuff.

'Society Of The Mind' is another pretty normal mid-paced song with some interesting vocal interplay, it's just a bit odd that Baker isn't responsible for much of the intricate multi-vocal pieces, which all come from bassist Carl Cadden-James as well as most of the obtuse lyrics for the whole album. As soon as the vocals stop the band go off on another speeded-up instrumental frenzy with more guitar duelling and keyboard solos.

The title track is the track that rocks the most, again with some great harmonies and tricky instrumental bits, before the album ends with the epic of all epics, 'First Light', which clocks in at just over 34 minutes.

A stirring keyboard intro gives way to a rollercoaster ride of time changes, bits that sound like Kansas and even bits that sound like Eloy. Some more instrumental passages that positively shred, harmony vocals, manic drumming, and all manner of clever segues that positively defy description. Unfortunately the lyrics are again pretty hard to fathom out and the piece ends with 5 minutes of non-musical sound effects that I could have done without. All in all pretty spectacular stuff.

Now to my main gripe with the band. I'm sure Mike Baker is a really great singer and obviously possesses a decent range, but I'm afraid that most of the time he really doesn't do it for me. It's becoming pretty obvious with each passing album that he isn't improving at the same rate as the rest of the band, all his vocal parts are written in slower tempos with the band obviously speeding up when the lyrics finish. Also, the best bits are when he's joined by Cadden-James, Wehrkamp and Allman, it's almost like they're trying to protect him with the way the songs are written. I'm probably completely wrong here, but that's the way the band have always come across to me. It's still a great album though, maybe even better than 'Tyranny' and has some pretty special moments.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

God Made Rock!

VON GROOVE
'The Seventh Day'
Z Records

VON GROOVE are a band whose albums seem to cause much debate amongst fans as to which is the best direction for them to go in. Some like the more poppy AOR of 'Test Of Faith', some like the more basic rock of 'Driving Off The Edge Of The World', some even like the darker 'Rainmaker' best. What most people do agree on though is that the debut was a classic, and 'Mission Man'/'Chameleon' was a pretty close second. So what's this one like then? Well actually it's a bit of everything.

Having replaced the departed Matthew Gerrard (now working with the U.S. Popstars winners Eden's Crush I believe!) with Tom Lewis, one of many ex-Honeymoon Suite bassists, the band haven't missed a beat and are back with a new studio album on a new label within a year of the last one.

'Believe In The One' is pretty much back to the 'House Of Dreams' style with a punchy riff, a few 'whoa-oh's, and a wall of backing vocals. The main thing that VG have in their favour is an original sound and an instantly recognisable voice in Mike Shotton, and whatever they do they just sound like themselves and nobody else. Mladen is always capable of a memorable riff and always plays the right thing for the song, so when everything comes together like on the ensuing 'Lily' and 'Oxygen' there's no denying the sheer quality of the material or the players.

'Lily' is uptempo and poppy while 'Oxygen' is quite simply stunning with a melody line and riff the likes of which hasn't been heard since album one, track one.

'Seventh Day' itself is a slow groover with a lot of the more modern guitar and vocal sounds associated with Mladen's other band, 24k. The chorus is pure Shotton though. 'Lifeline' on the other hand is pure pop and catchy with it.

Remember 'Two Nights In Tokyo'? Well 'Guns Over London' is the 2001 equivalent , a high energy rocker driven along by a cool Tom Lewis bassline, and although it's nothing the band couldn't write in their sleep it's very enjoyable nonetheless. 'The Best In Me' is a pretty decent attempt at a power ballad with some nice guitar sounds from Mladen and a nice solo which just manages to keep it the right side of cheesy. 'Heaven Knows Your Name' however is cliché city and maybe more effort should have been made to space the ballads out as two in a row is always one too many for me, unless you're called Journey of course!

'Soul Surgery' is also the kind of straight-ahead pop metal that should by rights be too corny to listen to these days, but in the hands of Von Groove can be turned into something quite palatable with another cool vocal line and some intense riffing. Album closer 'Angel City' is more of the same with Shotton's vocals twisting and turning in directions you don't expect, the guitar groove sucks you in then spins you around with some slide soloing and a rock-out ending.

Sharp production and that distinctly Canadian sound makes this another fine addition to the Von Groove catalogue.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

ADAGIO
'Sanctus Ignis'
Limb Music Products

Ever wondered what musicians did with their spare time now that it's not taken up by the prodigious levels of touring that used to be available to them in the 80's? The answer it would seem is to get involved in either more than one band, or immerse yourself in a succession of different side projects, the latter especially mushrooming in the last few years. Unlike tribute albums (a subject on which I've voiced my opinions on many occasions in several publications of late), extracurricular band projects at least have the merits of offering something new creatively speaking. However, whilst most have a certain degree of merit, there are relatively few which have the potential to surpass their main protagonist's regular job - Ian Parry's excellent Consortium Project perhaps coming the closest of late.

Essentially, not since the meteoric rise of Primal Fear effectively transposed the loyalties of Sinner main man Mat Sinner has a project displayed such awesome potential - until now that is. At first sight, Adagio is little more than a vehicle for the undoubted compositional and technical talents of 24 year old French guitarist Stephan Forte, a name with whom most of you will be unfamiliar (although believe me, that's a situation I fully

expect to change pretty quickly). Nevertheless, when you learn that the rest of the band is made up of various members culled from the ranks of Elegy, Pink Cream 69 and Majestic, and that the whole album was produced by PC69 bassist Dennis Ward (one of the most sought after producers in Europe right now), interest should be suitably piqued to investigate a little more closely.

Taking as its lead the bombastic, overblown power/progressive metal of such luminaries as Symphony X, Majestic and Malmsteen, and merging them with the grandiose classical themes laid down to posterity by composers of the stature of Bach, Mozart and Bartok, 'Sanctus Ignis' proves to be a symphonic / progressive metal masterpiece par excellence. Aside from Forte who shows amazing technical skill (imagine a head turning hybrid of Malmsteen and Symphony X man Michael Romeo) and a highly advanced, almost audacious songwriting ability throughout, the other surprising star of the show is PC69 frontman David Readman, his emotive, resonating vocals adding remarkable depth and passion to Forte's songs. Majestic man Richard Andersson also impresses with some grandiose keyboard contributions, striking up a sparring relationship with Forte not done this well since Romeo and Pinnella!

Every song is a complex, twisting monster, filled to overflowing with a myriad of tempo changes, differing moods and intricate instrumentation, and yet conversely possessed of such wonderfully accessible hook laden melodies. Even the colossal epic 'Seven Lords Of Sin' has the power and magnificence to captivate and enthral for its full eleven minute duration. As for the remainder, although markedly shorter (utilising the optimum four to seven minute time slots adopted by most of the genre's elite), they're still primed to explode in your subconscious like emotional Cemtex. Witness the joyous exuberance of Adagio in full, glorious flow on the likes of 'Second Sight', 'The Inner Road', 'The Order Of Enlil' or 'Sanctus Ignis'. There's even a suitably souped up instrumental interpretation of the Led Zeppelin chestnut 'Immigrant Song' ... phew!

Loud And Clear!

HALFORD
'Live Insurrection'
Metal Is

THE REVIVAL in fortunes of one time Judas Priest screamer Rob Halford is nothing short of remarkable, his renaissance from washed up 'nu-metal' has-been to reborn metal god in the space of some 18 moths as surprising as it is welcome. *Sure, there were plenty of doubters primed and ready to bring down the wrath of the almighty should the much touted 'come back' prove to be nothing more than bold rhetoric, but the release of the jaw breaking 'Resurrection' last year effectively silenced the critics in the most brutally appropriate way - you've only got to look at the album's standing in the various reader poll's for last year (our own included) for the irrefutable proof.*

Now, it's one thing I suppose to produce a stunning studio album when you have as much time as it takes to get things just so, but live, on stage in front of a baying crowd is a one shot deal. Recorded on the extensive 'Resurrection' world tour, 'Live Insurrection' is an invaluable historical document, a snapshot of a singularly unique moment in time, capturing Rob and his band of metal warriors in full glorious flight. I was privileged enough to catch Halford the band at their Rock City show a few months back, so I can fully attest to the amazing power and energy that the band exuded in their stage performance. So vivid and indelible is that memory that any live album would have to be pretty damn amazing to get within a mile.

Over the years the hard rock/metal genre has thrown up some classic stage sets ('Strangers In The Night', 'One More From The Road', 'Staying A Life', etc.), although recent years has seen that list remain fairly static, the result of a dearth of live efforts befitting of such status. Well, ... (suitable pause for a sharp intake of breath), ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to the first bona fide classic live album of the new millennium (although Vanden Plas came pretty close), 'Live Insurrection'. Produced by the inimitable Roy Z, this tears out of the speakers like a rabid tiger with an empty gut, taking the head off anyone foolish enough to get too close.

Featuring 28 tracks spread over two CD's, this is a truly remarkable release which not only emphasises the potency of Halford as a band in the right here, right now, but also shows the opposition exactly how it's done. As you'd expect, there's a healthy selection of material culled from 'Resurrection' (although somewhat strangely 'Locked And Loaded' is a little conspicuous by it's absence), as well as a fistful of Priest classics, and as an added bonus three brand new studio cuts. Metal in its purest, most undiluted form, the secret behind Halford (as it was with Priest in their heyday) is the ability to balance brutal ferocity with finesse and subtlety, this precocious aural assault offering up the best of both words. Nowhere is this more starkly contrasted than on the truly stunning 'Beyond The Realms Of Death' (arguably the mother of all power ballads). From the thunderous opener 'Resurrection', through the likes of 'The One You Love To Hate' (with a guest appearance from Maiden's Bruce Dickinson), 'Genocide', 'Sad Wings' and 'Into The Pit', to the subtler colours of 'Slow Down', 'Silent Screams' or 'Life In Black' this is nothing short of awesome from beginning to end!

Encores come in the shape of the aforementioned 'Beyond ..', 'Metal Gods', 'Breaking The Law' and the frantic 'Tyrant', the rapturous crowd lapping up every last tiny drop. Of the three new studio tracks, only 'Screaming In The Dark' is brand new, both 'Heart Of A Lion' and 'Prisoner Of Your Eyes' being re-polished demos; each however has that classic Halford sound stamped all the way through it.

A colossal live album which simply decimates all the competition - essential listening for every self respecting metal fan.

• **DAVE COCKETT**

The only thing that detracts slightly from the awesome majesty of 'Sanctus Ignis' is the inclusion of the rough demo 'Nifheim' at the end - interesting, but totally unnecessary in my opinion, given the devastating impact of the rest of the album. This is absolutely immense, and if LMP give it the right push, it should take the melodic metal scene by storm.

• **DAVE COCKETT**

URBAN TALE
'Urban Tale'
Now & Then/Frontiers

Frontiers/Now And Then Records is easily the best pure AOR and melodic rock label around at the moment. They have already released some wonderful albums this year such as Terry Brock, Prime Time, Kelly Keagy, Seventh Key, Bailey's Comet and the new releases from Stan Bush and Hush with more to follow.

Now we can add to the list the monster debut album from Finland's Urban Tale, a superb pure AOR band in the vein of Journey and Toto. Last year the band (which started life as a Journey tribute band) released a superb single called 'One Day' which dented the Finnish charts which subsequently gained them a record deal. They then hot footed it over to Sweden to record this wonderful debut which has a production that sounds crystal clear and songs are wonderfully catchy.

The CD starts with 'The Devil In Me', a brilliant AOR tune. Ironically this song sounds like it could have been left off from Journey's 'Raised On Radio' album. This album is what "Arrival" should have been and this song is just so brilliant. 'Passion Takes Over' follows and is a sophisticated keyboard driven AORster in the vein of Toto/Radioactive, again the Perry/Frederiksen influences shine in Kimmo's voice - this guy is seriously good and a contender for best singer of the year.

Up next is the classy 'Circus', a pure AOR/Melodic Rocker with a Journey/Toto inspired chorus, and is another song that could have come from 'Raised On Radio', 'The Seventh One' or 'Street Talk. The CD continues with one of my favourite songs, 'King Of Hearts', a radio-friendly swaying up-tempo ballad which has some beautiful instrumentation. Once again Kimmo's Perry like vocals are awesome.

Next track is the single everyone talked about, 'One Day (I'll Make You Mine)', which is prime-time pure AOR balladry, very much in the style of Journey and Kimmo again is magically inspiring with his immense golden coated magical god-like vocals. I mean this guy is up there with the best of them and you just dont get singers this classy these days, Kimmo and the whole band are a bunch of talented and very young guys, and it's refreshing to see a band like this who clearly know what they're about. Just listening to those awesome vocals makes me think that could Urban Tale be the AOR band to break through. They are better than the new Journey line up (which is practically Bad English anyway) and even though they are influenced by them and Toto, the band are original which is why every song on this album will make the hair on your neck stand up.

'Runaway Train' takes us back into classy uptempo AOR and is another highlight, whilst 'Engine' is a huge Toto sounding west coast AOR pop song with great harmonies during the chorus. 'Broken Chains' is next, a catchy uptempo ballad a la Toto/Journey with a wonderfully smooth chorus. It's another of my favourite songs. 'On The Edge' is similar to Perry's solo material whilst the song 'Doris Day' is, as you guessed, about the late actress. This is wonderfully pure AOR with huge harmonies and killer vocals from Kimmo and is another of the albums best songs. A mega song with great lyrics and instrumentation.

Finally we have the more mature sounding 'Water', a superb AOR/ballad with more massive vocal harmonies. Urban Tale's debut is an out and out classic which every AOR fan needs to own. More good news is that their label is bringing them over for the Gods in November, see you down at the front row.

• **NICK BALDRIAN**

WAR AND PEACE
'Light At The End Of The Tunnel'
Pony Canyon Japan

For most people Jeff Pilson was not only the mainstay of a sometimes decidedly shaky Dokken, being the human buffer between the ego's of Don Dokken and George Lynch, but was indeed the unsung hero and main driving force of the band. For this album, Jeff's second solo effort under the moniker of War and Peace, he has enlisted the talents of a veritable who's who of the rock world. Band-mate Reb Beach, John Norum (ex Europe), Paul Gilbert (ex Mr Big/Racer X) and Richie Kotzen (ex Poison) all make appearances while Pilson handles the main body of bass and keyboards ably assisted by James Kottak (Scorpions) on drums. Lead track, 'What Cost War' is one heavy son of a bitch with frantic pumping bass, broody riffs and Pilson supplying the gruff vocal, and is by far the heaviest think I have heard Pilson do to date. 'The Night You Walked Away' is back to more familiar territory, a very cool melodic riff, very similar to that Dokken sound and Reb showing us exactly why he is regarded as one of the best guitarists on the planet. I could sit here and tell you all about every track and by the end of the review (and several pages later!!) you would be slightly bored, such is the diversity on show here. To best sum this up, I would have to say that first and foremost there is a dark underlying theme brought to the fore in tracks such as the opener and 'End of the Tunnel' with their savage riff attack, while tracks such as 'The Night You Walked Away' and 'Playing God Again' are far kinder on the ears and could easily be lifted from any Dokken album. Musically this album is superb as you would expect considering the track records of all involved, however one thing Pilson isn't afraid to do is experiment a little, the odd processed vocal and the alarmingly melancholy 'Sweet Release' with its organ and violin providing the background for some atmospheric vocals, showing the man is not relying on past glories, and indeed is willing to take some risks. The album is diverse, very heavy in places, very melodic in others, but always dark.

What Jeff has tried to do here is take the Dokken sound, for which he is part responsible, and modernise it. But to be honest, despite his obviously good intentions, the album is a difficult listen and despite having it on constant rotation for the best part of a month I'm left with a sense of confusion. I honestly cannot work out whether I like it or not, or more importantly will anybody else like it. Dokken fans may even find this unappealing despite their familiarity with Pilson, as parts are too far removed from that traditional sound, but then again that's what he set out to do. Tread carefully on this one, check out the soundbytes on www.jeffpilson.com and make up your own minds. For posterity I'll record an open verdict on this one.

• **KIERAN DARGON**

WARMTH IN THE WILDERNESS
'A Tribute To Jason Becker'
Lion Music

Before joining David Lee Roth's band for the 1991 CD 'A Little Ain't Enough', Jason Becker (discovered by Mike Varney) shot to the limelight along side ex-Megadeth guitar player Marty Friedman in the speed metal band Cacophony. Both Becker and Friedman were in their teens at the time and the pair became recognised for their blistering warp speed guitar complexities and technique which was far beyond their teen years. Jason recorded three solo albums and two albums with Cacophony before he got the job with Roth at the age of 22,

replacing Steve Vai. Unfortunately, just as the Roth band went on tour in support of the album, doctor's diagnosed Jason with the crippling Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) which completely over took his body. Today, at 32 yrs old, Jason has to use a computer scanner to read and his eyes to communicate, but he still actively composes music under such a difficult burden. 'Warmth In The Wilderness' is a CHARITY CD and the difference between this and all the other tribute CD's is that this one has been created to help Jason fight his disease with all the profits being donated to Jason and his family which will hopefully ease his battle a little against ALS.

This is a double CD that takes a trip through Jason's remarkable career. Mastered by Eric Zimmermann with the original artwork by Eric Phillipethe, the CD features a whole guitar neck of top rate contributors such as (deep breath)...Vinnie Moore, Chris Poland (ex Megadeth), Marty Friedman, Ron Keel's Iron Horse, Paul Gilbert Racer X/Mr.Big), Steve Morse (Deep Purple/Dixie Dregs), Phantom Blue, Mark Boals (Yngwie Malmsteen), Lars Eric Mattsson, Jeff Pilson (Dokken), Robin McAuley (MSG), Ray Luzier (DLR Band), Bissonette Brothers, James Byrd, Patrick Rondat, Mike Chlasciak (Halford), Jeff Watson (Nightranger), Ted Poley, Mark Mangold, Kenny Aaronson (HSAS), David Ragsdale (Kansas), Patrick Rondat, Alex Masi amongst other hugely talented players. The wonderful thing about 'W.I.T.W' is that each artist has recorded their own renditions of Jason's music in their own style, thus no song is a complete copy of the original which would have been the easiest thing to do. Such as Sweden's Stormwind who open the album up with 'A Little Ain't Enough', who add their own stamp on the classic David Lee Roth song, adding technical influences in the mid section which makes the song sound even better. There are also completed versions of unfinished demos which were featured on Jason's 'Raspberry Jams' CD such as Hit The Ground Running's excellent version of 'Jasin Street' where the band have added a scratch vinyl effect to the song and from 'Perspective', David Martone has completely rewritten the song 'Higher' for guitar. This piece was originally a gospelish vocal only Bobby McFerrin inspired song.

Three songs which will suprise people are from Welsh virtuoso Phi Ansari Yaan-Zek whose version of the classic 'Air' piece is awe-inspiring, the neo-classical version of Cacophony's 'ESP' by Frenchie Cyril Archard and the hard to play version of the second Cacophony number 'Go Off' from 'Brighton's Evoloution' - three mega superb artists to keep your eyes on in the future. There are a few tracks on the CD that have been written in honour of Jason by Magnitude 9's Rob Johnson and Freak Kitchen's Mattias IA Eklund and a finale 'Outro Jam' that features a cool selection of players, including Torben Enevoldsen, James Byrd, Patrick Rondat, Ron Thal, Mike Chlasciak (Halford), Lars Eric Mattsson and Sami Asp whilst Cosmosquad's 'Jam For Jason' featuring Vinnie Moore, Jeff Watson, Jeff Kollman, Steve Morse and Chris Poland is another masterful piece that Jason will be proud of. I loved Vinnie Moores Latin section on this song.

Also cool is an instrumental version of Roth's 'Sensible Shoes' performed by Jeff Scheetz and 'Becker Ola' performed by Phantom Blue's Linda McDonald and Carnia Alfie. On the subject of the ladies it was great to hear 'Tell The Truth' which features an Alannah Myles style performance from Pamme of the band Haven along side Robin McAuley and Johnny Lima on vocals, with Alex Masi and Lars Eric Mattsson on guitar.This is a great rendition, and as I said no song on this CD is a direct copy of the original which makes for a hugely enjoyable listen. Listening back to Jason's complete original works goes to show how much of a talented musician he always was. His albums still sound fresh and inspiring (check out the recent reissue of 95's 'Perspective' which has Steve Perry on vocals) and it's such a tragedy that Jason caught this disease, a situation that has affected me profoundly. As it stands 'W.I.T.W' is one of the best tribute CDs and it's nice to see some of the most respected names in rock music paying homage to Jason's art and because of the success of this CD a Volume II follow up is currently being assembled which will feature more musicians. Thanks to all these people it feels as if the whole rock world has come together to help one of their brothers in his hour of need which is quite amazing and really moving. Add to that the fact that US magazine Billboard featured an article on Jason and the CD and that a TV commercial has also been made to help awareness of this record. Buy this CD folks. It is a rare celebration of wonderful music - Jason Becker's music will never ever be forgotten. For an interview with Jason, check out http://www.rockreunion.com.

• WOLF GANT

SHY
'Brave The Storm'
'Excess All Areas'
Zoom Club

The last couple of years have been a busy time for Shy collectors with a whole host of re-releases, live albums and new material, so it's only fitting that Zoom Club release the band's best two albums.

Taking 'Brave The Storm' first, it was released on CD in Japan a few years ago but never got a domestic release, but here it is at last, and along with 'Excess...' contains bonus tracks. The band were unfortunately plagued by some of the shoddiest sounding albums ever made, and considering 'Brave...' originally came out on RCA in 1985 and was produced by Tony Platt, it wasn't much different. What they did manage with this album however, was the best set of tunes of their career.

I hadn't heard this for quite a few years but it's amazing just how fresh it sounds, and one thing that Tony Platt did manage was to get the performances of their lives from the band. As far as punchy and tuneful melodic rock goes, this sounds much fresher than many of the 'classics' from the same period, and superb songs like 'Hold On (To Your Love)' and 'Keep The Fires Burning' are as good as it gets. Much underrated as musicians, the performances of singer Tony Mills, keyboard player Paddy McKenna, and particularly guitarist Steve Harris are the pinnacle of 80's British AOR, but the rhythm section weren't slouches either. 'Reflections' is a great ballad, although I prefer the version on the debut, but the pleading tones of Mr. Mills and one of THE melodic guitar solo's of all time, makes it indispensable.

Elsewhere, 'My Apollo' and 'The Hunter' are both top-notch, keyboard-tinged, mid-paced AOR tunes, while Tony Mills' performance on the title track is as good as any high-voiced singer you can name, and the keys on this are just fabulous. One thing the band seemed to grasp that a lot of their peers didn't was the use of dynamics, that light and shade that makes good songs great, and they used it to great effect.

'Wild Wild Woman' is the one song that I never particularly liked, a bit too run of the mill and cliched, and the neo-classical guitar bit was being over-done even back then. The lighter 'Caught In The Act' has some new romantic keyboard sounds, but is a pretty mature outing with some interesting arrangements for such a young band, while 'Was I Wrong?' is typical high energy Shy and a rock-out ending to the original album.

The bonus tracks are the 12 inch extended version of 'Hold On' which is essential, and 'Strangers In Town' which is mostly instrumental and sounds like it should have had a lead vocal over it. There are also two live tracks which are pretty raw sounding. 'Two Hearts' is bog-standard unspectacular melodic hard rock, while 'Behind Closed Doors' is much better with some great harmonies and if nothing else, proved that the band could play live. If Tony Mills hadn't been ill at the time of their one and only live TV appearance, who knows what could have happened.

Zoom Club have made a very god job of this re-release and the album sounds infinitely better than the original LP did, but where's the free T-shirt?

To their credit, RCA must have had a lot of faith in Shy, because after 'Brave The Storm' failed to set the world alight they decided to go the whole hog and move the operation Stateside. The well-respected Neil Kernon was brought in to produce 'Excess All Areas', and the band were hooked up with outside writers of the stature of Don Dokken and Duane Hitchings. The album was actually recorded in Holland and the UK but pre-production was done in the US, which is how Tony ended up doing backing vocals for the debut Cinderella album. For the massive amount of money that the label must have spent, they got a great sounding Shy album (at last!) and some more killer tunes.

There are great heavy AOR anthems like the Michael Bolton/Duane Hitchings written 'Emergency' and the Dokken co-write 'Break Down The Walls', and the band's originals are usually up to the same standard. 'Can't Fight The Nights' is a great catchy commercial tune with another superb Harris solo, and the excellent 'Under Fire' features some of Kernon's signature sound effects. The ballad 'When The Love Is Over' is up to the 'Reflections' standard, but unfortunately the other ballad, 'Just Love Me' isn't, and the definitive rock version of Cliff Richard's 'Devil Woman' had already been done by Riot.

What Kernon succeeded in doing is getting a perfectly balanced sound where even though the guitars were loud, everything else could still be heard clearly. Paddy McKenna'a keys jump out of the mix at you, Roy Davis' bass is warm sounding and resonant, and the underrated Alan Kelly gets the big drum sound that he always had live. The poppy 'Talk To Me' should have been an MTV hit and the punchy 'Telephone' ended the album in fine uptempo style, but it's the bonus tracks that make this essential, even if you already have the original CD. 'Run For Cover' and 'Only You' are more of the same from the same album sessions, and the awesome 'Don't Wanna Lose Your Love', despite

Shoot To Kill!

TNA
'Finger On The Trigger'
Kivel Records

KIVEL RECORDS have built up a very impressive roster since their inception a few years back, this however, the debut release by New York based four piece TNA (or Tits and Ass for the uninitiated) represents a slight departure of sorts for the label. *Kivel has built it's reputation with hard edged melodic rock, almost party rock, with bands such as Attraction and Adriangale - this release however represents a soiree into slightly heavier waters. Coming across for the most part as a hybrid of late eighties/early nineties street rock a la my sadly missed (sob) Wildside with a touch of debt era Skid Row and copious amounts of Ratt and Dokken, TNA have found a groove and with this release have initiated a process of serious butt kickin'...or in other words this thing rocks like the proverbial beast!! 'Rung on the Ladder' and 'Take You Home Tonight' hit you like both barrels simultaneously discharged from a sawn off at ten feet, riffs flying in every direction courtesy of Sean Tarr. The rhythm section of drummer*

Danny Tore and bassist Phil Pacheco drive the band mercilessly while vocalist Mike McManamon does a more than creditable job his bassy tones complimenting the music perfectly. 'Let Me Down Easy' slows things down as we enter Babylon AD territory - a big juicy ballad delivered with plenty of balls. One of the best tracks on the album comes in the form of track five 'Life goes On', a juicy riff fest built on the back of a cool semi acoustic intro. However it's the next track 'Falling Down' which is the jewel in the crown with its infectious riff and the band seriously in the groove, hammering out four and a half minutes of high class hard rock...if only every track on every album were this good. 'Draw the Line' is for the most part frantic, galloping guitars and pummelling bass battering the listener into submission and in a live scenario will no doubt give the front row the perfect excuse to loosen the neck muscles. The Zeppelin/Bad Moon Rising feel of 'Bittersweet' sees McManamon put in his best vocal performance on the album, snarling his way through the verse and howling his way through through the chorus - a great track. 'Can't wait Forever' is a shared lead vocal as guitarist Sean Tarr steps up to the mic to show us that he is in possession of a fine set of pipes also, and what a song! Great fun and one of those bloody choruses that creeps into the cranium and just won't go away. Album closer 'Bad Girl' is so heavily clichéd it's unreal, but then again with a name like TNA if anyone is entitled to be tongue in cheek it's these guys, although the song suffers from some serious production problems. In fact if I was to level any criticism at the album sonically I would have to say the production is all over the place at times. The drum sound on 'Life goes On' is questionable, the snare at times being way to far up in the mix, while on 'Bittersweet' the hi hats become a little irritating after a while. While in the overall context of the album, this is a small complaint but I notice from the production credits that there were no less than three different producers involved with the album - definitely a case of too many cooks guys. Next time pick one and stick to one as at least we will have some consistency. For a debut album this is pretty impressive - bags of obvious talent and now all that's needed is some focus. Other than that, for all those who long for a reason or ten to let rip on that trusty old air guitar and bang that head with some serious intent, here's your poison. Recommended.

• KIERAN DARGON

not quite having the same great sound, is one of the best songs they ever wrote and has another great Harris solo.

The songs and performances of the band on these two CD's, especially Tony Mills and Steve Harris, should have propelled them far further than they ever got. Imagine if 'Brave The Storm' had been produced by Neil Kernon, now that would have been something else. As it is these albums are an essential history lesson.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

ANATOMIC
'In For The Thrill'
Suspect Records

Hands up all those that remember Shy Tiger who recorded their one off album 'Feed the Kitty' way back in 1994. Good, well in that case this in fact is the second album from the said same boys only the name has been changed to protect the innocent because it is the same band, just a little older and wiser. Remaining true to their roots, Anatomic offer us eleven tracks steeped in the tradition of party rock not a million miles away from Tuff, Poison or Johnny Lima but with just enough edge not to deemed 'glam'. 'Until you're Gone' kicks off proceedings and is a solid enough number but nothing spectacular. A decent song, cool backing vocals and some neat guitarwork. 'Drift Away', which incidentally is Johnny Lima co write, is a very neat track which has the JL stamp all over the chorus, extremely singable and melodic. 'Deep End' is next up and that's exactly what somebody should do with it - throw it in at the deep end....horribly generic, the type of drudge that lots of LA bands pedalled in the early 90's, only most of them far better. 'Out of My Heart' is a ballad with a cool acoustic guitar/piano intro intertwined with a lovely lead break building into a very laid back mature sounding song. Very nice. 'Make it Real' is another up tempo number with another hugely singable chorus, in fact possibly one of the best tracks on the album. 'Goodbye Today' is another feel good number, cool riff, slamming drums and yet another super chorus that is quite infectious.

Vocalist Ryan Freeman may not be in the big leagues, however he does very well with what he's got and more importantly can deliver a good tune well. 'Livin' a Lie' is an average numbe , however it does have that chorus. In fact these boys have a happy knack of coming up with the big bouncy sing along type chorus in every song , a very rare trait in this day and age. 'Hate to Say Goodbye' is the second Johnny Lima co write and boy how it shows, but on this track Freeman's voice is lacking. I'll bet JL would slaughter this one, however yet again a killer chorus. 'The Price' is a six and a half minute semi acoustic epic, well written and delivered and is definitely one of the best songs on the album. 'Power of the Heart' is again a trip into mediocrity, this song has been written a million times before and to be honest Anatomic don't do very much to make it rise above the also ran stakes. The album closes with an acoustic version of 'Make it Real' in the truest acoustic form - a solitary guitar, bass and lead vocal with everybody joining in for the chorus...nice showcase. All in all this is not a great album, the musicianship is of a reasonable standard, the vocals are in need of some attention, especially on some of the higher range stuff. The songs are hit and miss and of the four best tracks on the album, two are Johnny Lima co writes, one written by Brent DeLeo and the other is actually a band written number. There is however a lot of promise on view, but what Anatomic need right now is guidance more than anything else. Of course another few decent numbers wouldn't go astray either, but that can be worked on. There is a rumour that Johnny Lima will be working with the band on their next album, both in a songwriting and production capacity which could bring some very interesting results. I wouldn't run out and spend your money on this one. Wait for the next one as it will hopefully be far superior.

• KIERAN DARGON

Terrorised!

REIGN OF TERROR
'Sacred Ground'
Limb Music Productions

WITH A NAME like Reign Of Terror you'd perhaps conclude that this lot were some Norwegian Black Metal outfit, or perhaps some jackbooted neo-fascists spitting out extreme right wing propaganda, either way you'd generally assume the musical accompaniment to have all the finesse and melody of a road drill. *You could, but you'd be wrong. 'Sacred Ground' is the third album from this US neo-classical power metal band, a band built around the extraordinarily explosive fretboard talents of Joe Stump, head metal/rock guitar tutor at Berklee College Of Music. The instrumental section of the band is rounded out by Event duo Jay Rigney (bass) and Matt Scurfield (drums), both extremely gifted musicians in their respective field, although their contributions are definitely subordinate to Stump's dramatic six string pyrotechnics. Stump first came to my attention a couple of years back with his 'Rapid Fire Rondo' solo album, and whilst it wasn't dissimilar to so many others in this particularly arcane recess of the hard rock genre, there was no doubting the guy was a truly awesome shredder. So you may reasonably ask, why has it taken three band albums before the guy secures a European release?*

A perfectly valid question, and one no doubt answered pretty conclusively by the fact that 'Sacred Ground' is the first Reign Of Terror album to feature the vocal talents of Mike Vescera, perhaps better known for his work with Malmsteen, Loudness and his own MVP project. Certainly, Vescera's rampaging metal scream helps to add a suave, rather distinguished air to the tracks on offer, but all I will say is that if album's one and two were half as impressive as this, it's the European public who've missed out, not Mr Stump!

Imagine a combination of Stormwind at their most frenetic overlaying classic Malmsteen with consistently good songs, then stir in the same explosive guitar sound which so characterised the first KenZiner release, and you have the perfect recipe for one huge juggernaut of an album. Dominated by the near cataclysmic guitar/vocal duelling that seems to be taking place between Stump and Vescera throughout, 'Sacred Ground' is piled high with darkly brooding, yet stylish neo-classically slanted power metal - the kind Yngwie keeps hinting at from time to time, yet somehow never manages to carry off convincingly on anything like a regular or consistent basis.

As is the nature of the beast, a fair proportion of these songs are played at a fairly brisk rate of knots, although eloquence and sophistication in their arrangement and delivery means that they never degenerate to the tub thumping dirge employed by so many when the pace gets above a spirited canter. Cast your eye over such fine examples of the genre as 'Last Time' which sounds like Loudness with Malmsteen on guitar, the simmering 'Save Me' which opens the album in grandiose fashion, or the searing title track 'Sacred Ground'. Those with more varied tastes should also check out some of the slower numbers on offer, cuts such as the smouldering 'Still Holding On' which sounds like the semi divine offspring of some illicit union between Stratovarius and Led Zeppelin, or the unrelenting hypnotic vibe of 'Still Holding On' with it's thunderously explosive mid section. There's also the almost obligatory cover tacked on at the end, this time a frantic run through of Rainbow's 'Kill The King', and whilst we're talking Blackmore, 'Undercover' has a real Purple feel to it.

For fans of sophisticated melodic metal, Reign Of Terror are manna from heaven, and I wouldn't be at all surprised to see 'Sacred Ground' top a few polls come January.

• *DAVE COCKETT*

NAME YOUR POISON
'Poison Tribute'
Perris Records

This is a great idea from Tom at Perris records and timing is immaculate with Poison's current touring success in the States plus the bands get great exposure because of the free snippets CD that contains the cuts from their current CDs distrubuted by Perris Records.

For me reviewing this CD is like an A to Z of my mates, but on first play it made me think that Poison's heads are gonna swell big time because they can't be emulated and also the songs are still great even after all this time but their songs don't sound so great with other people doing them.

Stevie Rachelle (Tuff) comes off pretty good, this guy alway wanted to be Bret and his chance. 'Look What The Cat Dragged In' sounds like Alice Cooper in drag! By the way Stevie, Bret would never wear one of those indie style woolly hats, it's not amusing, it's not funny and it's not fashionable. Get rid of it man! Speaking of hats, here comes Bret with Black hair, yes it's Pretty Boy Floyd's Steve Summers. He has the honour (?) of doing 3 songs although I think his voice is too Vince Neil to really cover these songs but the mix with Kerri Kelly's vocals on 'I Won't Forget You' is good.

Derek St Holmes doing 'Something To Believe In' sounds great although he sounds like a preacher. Saying that, he would have been great on 'Native Tongue'. Steevi Jaimz, the English terrier does an admirable job on 'Cry Tough' (lick lick) although what's 'Fiy yi yi yite' all about? Steevi keeps the UK flag flying big time against the likes of Cherry Street and Erotic Suicide. Cherry Street's presentation needs major work whilst Erotic Suicide sound like Feargal Sharkey on this track, but I do normally like Erotic. All in all this is more listenable than the Bret Michaels tribute and a damn fine idea.

• KELV HELLRAZER

DANGER DANGER
'Cockroach'
Advance CD

The long overdue CBS release finally sees the light of day and for Poley fans and D2 stalwarts, it couldn't have come quicker. I've stuck by Mr Poley although I think both parties have improved since the spilt. I thought 'Screw It' was well too cliched ridden back when it was released, but constant influence by my wife has brought me round to the fact that it has it's moments. 'Cockroach' saw the guys looking back to their mistakes on that opus and improving them ten-fold.

What you get here is both versions of the album, one with Ted Poley and the other with current Danger man Paul Laine on vocals. A great idea but comparisons are obvious. Lets start with the Ted version: 'Still Kickin' is ballsy with the direction Mr Poley was to take with Bone Machine, not grunge but well played heavy AOR with eighties mega big hair production. 'Afraid of Love' is mega D2 with Def Lep backing vocals. Ted's on top form and this is like a great track from their debut. 'Walk It Like You Talk It', despite it's slight cliches, also rocks out and the cliches are forgiven seeing as it was early nineties. Andy Timmons still widdlys like it never went out of fashion.

'Goin Goin Gone' is my favourite track. The verse barely sounds like Ted or D2...modern but still with it's foot hooked in melody. 'Don't Break My Heart Again' is magnificent balladry, very Melodica. This is where Mr Poleys at his best, my only moan is the slight Seattle-isms on 'Sick Little Twisted Mind' and the slight cliches that creep in here and there.

Paul Laine's vocals really suit the heavier material, maybe sometimes better than Ted's, especially on ''Still Kickin' but Laine lacks originality big time and Ted wins outright on the balladsm but he's still a good vocalist and he sounds a bit Burtnick like on the album's ballad 'Don't Break My Heart Again', but this stuff was written for Poley's voice. Unfortunately I don't have 'Time in a Bottle' on my CD but this track is featured on the Laine version only. It would have been good to not have to compare. I can't remember the politics or the whys and whats about these releases, it's just great to hear them finally.

• KELV HELLRAZER

IRON SAVIOUR
'Dark Assault'
Noise

Like Primal Fear, who's latest opus is reviewed elsewhere this issue, Iron Savior came along just at the right time, just as a whole new generation of metal fans were reawakening to the appeal of bands such as Judas Priest and Iron Maiden. Keen to identify themselves with something new, something they could call their own, the underground grasped excitedly at bands such as Iron Savior and Primal Fear, catapulting them to the upper echelons almost overnight. However, both bands still remain pretty big fish in what is ostensibly a rather small pond.

As the career of both bands seems to have mirrored one another, both releasing albums at similar times, both reaching roughly the same market with equivalent sales in terms of CD's and bums on seats, so comparisons between the two are almost inevitable. With both running pretty much neck and neck right now, the stakes are fairly high, so neither band can afford to let the other gain the upper hand. So what can 'Dark Assault' offer?

Like its predecessors, this is another riff heavy, hard hitting metal album, combining Judas Priest influences with the likes of Helloween, Gamma Ray and 'Restless And Wild' era Accept. Continuing the theme of the 'Iron Savior' (a sci-fi concept that I haven't really got the time nor space to go into here) the album is divided between all out driving, breakneck speed metal, and brooding, more mid paced workouts. Within the context of the former, admittedly rather limited approach, the band deliver some great pyromaniacal burnouts such as the blistering 'Seek And Destroy' 'Never Say Die' (which sounds far superior to the version which appeared on the recent 'I've Been To Hell' single), or 'Firing The Guns'. However, obviously realising the restrictions such a stance can itself impose, there are clear signs that Iron Savior are now looking to slow down and broaden their musical bases somewhat.

Numbers such as the powerful 'Made Of Metal' with it's heady atmospherics and slightly overblown pomposity, or the rampaging 'Eye Of The World' show a far more mature side of the band which only rarely shone through in the past. This new found maturity is further reinforced by tracks such as the mini epic 'After The War' (kinda Ozzyish at times) or attitude laden 'Dragon's Rising', and whilst the playing and attitude remains as uncompromising and vigorous as ever, the progression shows that Iron Savior are capable of competing on a much broader stage. Longstanding fans might also wish to note that there's another Priest cover, this time a smouldering run through of 'Delivering The Goods'.

On the production front, main man Piet Sielck has given 'Dark Assault' a powerful, robust metal sound, without sacrificing any of the clarity, bringing out more of the harmonies than previously. Also, as you'd expect from players of the calibre of Kai Hansen (Gamma Ray), the playing too is upper quartile stuff. A definite step in the right direction.

• DAVE COCKETT

KINGDOM COME
'Too'
Spitfire Records

For all the flack it generated on it's release back in '88, I quite liked the debut Kingdom Come album. Okay, it was quite obviously heavily influenced by Led Zeppelin, and for frontman Lenny Wolf to try and claim otherwise in press interviews was both naive and crass, but when it came down to it, they were bloody proficient at it. Let's face it, if plagiarism (even of the overtly blatant variety) was outlawed in hard rock circles, there'd have been a real dearth of anything worthwhile to listen to over the past thirty years. You don't see anybody queuing up to give Two Fires or The Storm a good kicking because they sound like Journey, let alone the ten million or so Dream Theater clones who've emerged in the last decade, so I never really saw why people objected to Kingdom Come so vociferously - get a life for Christ sakes!

Anyway, an awful lot of water has passed under the proverbial bridge since then, fashions...even governments...have come and gone, yet old Lenny still soldiers on regardless. Although he's had some commendable releases under the Kingdom Come banner over the years - most notably (in my opinion) both 'In Your Face' and 'Hands Of Time', maybe even the more recent 'Twilight Cruiser' - he's never topped that debut in terms of songwriting quality or impact, slipping further down the ranks of hard rock's aristocracy with each passing year.

Whilst 'Too' with it's 'none more black' cover (very Spinal Tap, or should that be Metallica ...is there a difference?!) is probably not going to do too much to slow that seemingly inevitable slide into oblivion, particularly if you consider most of these songs have appeared before (of which more later), it at least proves that Wolf has half an ear for a hooky melody. Yes, he still sounds like Robert Plant, that's genetic, so short of drastic surgery on either his throat or his nads that ain't gonna change much, so if that's your hang up, you may as well stop reading now.

Of the eleven tracks which comprise 'Too', less than half are actually 'new' songs, the rest consisting of old Stone Fury numbers (now there's a name from the past), plus reworking's of several cuts from his most recent German language release. Actually, as a compilation, they sit together pretty well...atmospheric, thoughtful, and for the most part fairly pedestrian...although as a representation of Kingdom Come in full flight, they sort of fall somewhat wide of the mark. To be honest, none of these songs is going to make that much of an impact outside Wolf's inner circle anyway, which in some respects is a shame as the likes of the reflective 'Waiting', bombastic 'Free Your Mind' and eclectic 'Tell Me What I've Done' do have their moments, but for most this will just be a case of 'been there, seen that...next!'.

There's still evidence of life in the old dog, but this introspective, at times quite dour release is definitely not going to put him back on top. For fans only.

• DAVE COCKETT

PRISONER
'II'
Z Records

After the first Prisoner album had been so well received, the follow up was one of the most eagerly awaited albums of the year. Mainman Tommy Denander had stated that because the Prisoner and Rainmaker projects had been so similar there would be a line drawn between the two acts to make them completely different entities, the solution being to keep the rockier songs for the next Rainmaker CD. Also, with Denander working on a solo album and his Radioactive project as well as the two Z Records bands, was he not in danger of spreading himself too thin? Well, on the evidence of this album I would say he has.

This isn't a bad album by any means, the problem is that it's so far removed from the debut that for the many who bought that particular gem of a disc may find this a little too lightweight. Taking the direction of his good friends Toto as a blueprint, this is definitely more West-Coast AOR than Melodic Hard Rock, the main difference being the almost total lack of anything resembling a guitar riff. There are solos of course, and Denander is a master of the art, but the programmed bass and particularly weak programmed drum sound make some of the songs even lighter than they should be.

Opener 'Deadend' for example is a great song with superb vocals (a feature throughout!), and some nice guitar from Tommy, but the drums take away from the song making it sound like there's something missing. Most of the songs ride along on the keys of Ricky Delin, which are both mature and very well recorded. The same goes for the likes of 'One Way', 'Return My Heart'and especially 'Standing On The Outside', which is a wonderful song, but the lack of bottom end makes it sound like an unfinished demo.
Elsewhere there's some fine songwriting and vocal harmonies going on, and to compare 'Hold On' and 'I Am Right Here' to Toto just has to be a compliment. 'Prisoners' is a little different and the way it's arranged works very well, particularly vocalists Geir Ronning and Piere Wensberg whose voices complement each other perfectly. When singing separately I think the more experienced Ronning has the edge, but both do well to breathe some life into the flat, almost one-dimensional sound.

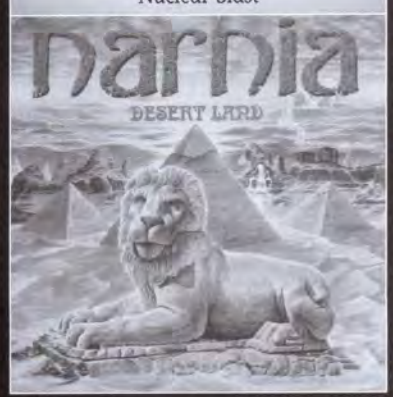
Another problem is the inconsistency of the recordings, with some tracks also being louder than others like the 2nd Tower City album, but not as inconsistent as that. There are also some slushy ballads that I could have done without with 'Just To Think' being the most cringe-inducing lyric I've heard in a long time. The following instrumental 'Woke Up Dead (Again)' sounds positively inspired after that with it's Toto meets Saga vibe. 'Hold On' is a great song although the main theme is a little too close to Le Roux's 'Turning Point', and the last song, 'Susan', is the most upbeat and has the most guitar on the whole album. While the cover of Britney Spears 'You Drive Me Crazy' is pretty unnecessary, it's not different enough to be interesting, and not over-the-top enough to be tongue-in-cheek.

To sum up, this is a patchy album that will disappoint many fans of 'Blind'. There are some great vocals, some incredibly mature guitar playing, and some excellent songs, but I find myself dwelling on how it could easily have been much better. By taking on so many projects, it seems Tommy Denander is struggling to meet deadlines, which would explain his non-appearance at the Z-Rock show and why this album sounds so rushed.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

3rd Time Lucky!

NARNIA
'Desert Land'
Nuclear Blast



JUST IN case you've so far managed to avoid contact with Narnia, the band first drew blood back in '98 with their impressive 'The Awakening' debut, following that up a year or so later with the equally essential 'Long Live The King. *Narnia are frontrunners in a new breed of Swedish band (along with Nocturnal Rites) who have emerged in the wake of HammerFall, mixing the driving speed metal of bands like Stratovarius or Helloween with the neo-classical melodies and guitar technicianship of Yngwie Malmsteen. Nothing particularly new I'll grant you, but they do it with a style and panache that's increasingly rare these days.*

Originally dominated by the all embracing partnership of vocalist Christian Liljegren (possessed of a fine, classic Scandie voice) and guitar genius Carl Johan Grimmark (a player who, along with Stormwind's Thomas Wolf, spearheads a whole new generation of Swedish guitar heroes), the Narnia sound has now become much more of a collaborative band effort. That's not to say that Grimmark and Liljegren are no longer the main focus of the band, because in all strictness they still are, it's just that the other guys now seem to be part of an integral supporting cast, not just hired hands. Keyboard player Martin Claesson in particular really helping to lift Grimmark's solos to new heights of baroque grandeur and majesty.

Third album 'Desert Land' sees the band at a bit of a crossroads in their career, keen to consolidate on the fan base they've already built, yet really wanting to stretch their wings as writers. Therefore, whilst this is still essentially the same atmospheric, Malmsteenesque metal which characterised the first two albums, there are now definite hints of a more epic and ambitious edge creeping into songs like 'Angels Are Crying' and studious 'Trapped In This Age'.

So far, Narnia have always started each album off with a bang, and 'Desert Land' is no exception, as the rampaging 'Inner Sanctum' is first out of the starting gate. Bold and upbeat, it has a swaggering, self assured charm and an abundance of impressive guitar licks from Grimmark. And as if that wasn't enough, the thunderous 'The Witch And The Lion' stokes up the boiler even more, it's rip snorting double bass drum fuelled riffs highly reminiscent of early Malmsteen numbers, with maybe just a touch of sophistication a la Symphony X.

However, unlike a lot of their contemporaries, Narnia aren't content to sit back and settle for potentially one dimensional speed metal, as the grinding relentless 'Falling From The Throne' proves. At times this has a very real Tony Martin era Black Sabbath feel to it, and is definitely one area the band would be well advised to exploit further. 'Revolution Of Mother Earth' is a passion drenched power ballad (very baroque in structure), the aforementioned 'Angels Are Crying' is another overbearing mid paced number, whilst the volatile 'Walking The Wire' sees a return to more up tempo territory.

If you like brooding melodic metal with a passion for Malmsteen, Dio or Majestic, then I guarantee you'll love Narnia.

• DAVE COCKETT

HOTWIRE
'Middle Of Nowhere'
Point Music

Originally put together in the early 90's, with the release of their self titled debut in '95 German hard rock act Hotwire came over as little more than a third rate Bonfire (mind you, at the time as I recall, Bonfire themselves were only a pale imitation of the band who released the mighty 'Fireworks'). Obviously, given the fact that the thing was produced by Claus Lessmann and Hans Ziller, such comparisons were hardly surprising, but even with such help 'Hotwire' lacked any real spark, a limp production and dull songs seemingly destined straight for the cut out bins. It was therefore quite a surprise when a couple of years down the line the band came back with 'Face Another Day', a decidedly mellower, yet overall far more coherent release.

So far so good. If you then jump forward a couple more years you'd find the band ensconced in the studios recording songs for what was to be their third studio album

'Middle Of Nowhere'. I say 'was' with good reason because just as the finishing touches were being put to the final mixes, the band broke in two, vocalist Werner Stadi deciding to go his own way - did he jump, or was he pushed I wonder ? (According to their web site he was definitely fired.). Undaunted, the rest of the band hired themselves a new singer (Andy Scott Urbeck), and finished the album, re-recording all the vocals. Then things take a decidedly bizarre turn.

Point, in their infinite wisdom have released 'Middle Of Nowhere' as a deluxe, double CD set featuring both sets of recordings. The first disc, entitled 'Middle Of Nowhere' is the 'official' new album with Urbeck out front, whilst the second, going under the name of Werner Stadi's Hotwire (The Original) and entitled '... And Never Surrender !' is the original recordings (featuring seven of the nine tracks which made the end product). Depending on your viewpoint, theirs is either the most gentlemanly disagreement in the history of hard rock, or the most surreal - being a cynical old git I'd tend to go for the latter.

Ok then, moving on to the music itself (which after all, is the real reason we're here), how do these two versions stack up against one another? Basically picking up from where 'Face Another Day' left off, this is another pleasant, although unspectacular, foray into soft boiled Euro rock. On the downside, at just nine standard length tracks, it's not the longest album in the world, particularly when you consider one is an acoustic version of AC/DC's 'You Shook Me All Night Long', one is a reworking of 'Sometimes She Cries' from the debut, and one track actually appears in two formats! Opening up with 'Midnight Romeo' things start brightly enough, its bouncy, good time party vibe probably the closest in spirit to the debut. 'Middle Of Nowhere' is a subtly orchestrated, acoustic led ballad with a catchy chorus, 'Nothing To Say' is a mid paced anthem, whilst the lengthy ballad 'Lost In Your Eyes' (the one with two versions) has a slick, laid back feel and gets my vote as pick of the bunch.

You'll no doubt have noticed that I haven't distinguished which version is which. That's because there isn't really that much of a discernable difference, both vocalists operating in very similar territory, which makes both versions musically almost identical. An interesting concept, but I can't really see this catching on - can you imagine a Van Halen triple with Roth, Hagar and Cherone all singing the same songs, I think not.

• Dave Cockett

Spellbound!

LAST TRIBE
'The Ritual'
Now & Then/Frontiers

THIS ALBUM came as a major surprise, and at the time of writing (early July) gains my highest "stonking" rating. Apparently signed by Now & Then/Frontiers too late for a track to be included on the Union 4 sampler, what we have here is a debut album that is frighteningly good in its own right, but which also augers well for really great things from the band in the future.

It is in some respects an amazingly diverse album and upon first listen I felt it was perhaps too diverse. However quality will always shine through, and it was immediately apparent that The Ritual has this in abundance, and this quality has truly etched itself upon my consciousness with repeated plays.

The album is a heady mixture of melodic, neo-classical rock and metal with progressive elements. In addition there is one of the best acoustic ballads you are likely to hear this year: 'Falling'. I hit the repeat button twice when this track appeared - once because I had to convince myself that I was still listening to the same CD and twice because it is simply that good!

Last Tribe is the creation of Swedish guitarist, keyboard player and songwriter Magnus Karlsson. Some of you may recognise this name for Karlsson was also a member of Midnight Sun whose album 'Nemesis' was released last year. (It completely passed me by, I must admit, so I am unable to draw any comparisons). The band was originally formed whilst he was at Malmo College of Music where he studied classical guitar, so the neo-classical elements present in The Ritual should not come as a surprise. However, this will inevitably lead to cross-references with fellow countryman, Yngwie Malmsteen, in terms of style and technique. Whilst I can, perhaps, recognise some similarities in places, I much prefer to relish Karlsson for what he is: an extremely talented musician in his own right.

Vocalist Rickard Bengtsson, drummer Kristoffer Andersson and bassist Pär Wallmark - none of whom I have encountered in other bands - complete the lineup. Karlsson may be the virtuoso here, but the other band members are no mere slouches, and Bengtsson is a particularly impressive vocalist across the range of musical styles presented. I always regard Nation and their impressive 'Without Remorse' as a benchmark for comparison when it comes to assessing Swedish bands of this type. It is my view that this album by Last Tribe is certainly the equal of 'Without Remorse' and that in some respects it is most definitely better: the vocal department being a prime example.

This is an album without a single substandard track, and so many of them are a sheer joy to listen to repeatedly, but I think the final pairing of the pomptastic melodic rock of 'Ready For The Storm' (get ready for the harpsicord!) and the instrumental title track where Karlsson really shreds could be as good a starting place as any. Yet why not simply start from the beginning and let MHR opener 'Spellbound' begin to reel you in to the charms of this album.

So, just because you have identified lots of good stuff to buy from the Now & Then/Frontiers roster from listening to Union 4, don't for goodness sake let this little gem pass you by. It is heavier and has more overtly progressive passages than many of the releases on this label, so for those of you who have no desire to step outside of the confines of AOR it may not be essential. But for the rest of you, it probably is!!

• Paul Jerome Smith

ICE AGE
'Liberation'
Magna Carta

New Yorkers Ice Age debuted a couple of years back with their impressive 'The Great Divide' album, a complex, technical slice of Dream Theateresque progressive metal filled with soaring hook lines, brooding riffs and compulsive instrumental passages. Unlike so many of their contemporaries who've emerged in the shadow of the mighty DT, Ice Age were not content to merely emulate their heroes note for note, instead they wanted to take the basic framework and embellish it with ideas of their own, bringing older references to bear as they wove the likes of Kansas and Styx into their own unique style. Looking back, although it might have passed many people by because of the glut of quality releases at the time, for me it was one of the musical highlights of the year.

Having been a fervent admirer of the debut, I was pretty keen to hear the follow up 'Liberation', and now it's finally here I'm pleased to say it's every bit as impressive as its predecessor. The backbone of the Ice Age sound is provided by guitarist Jimmy Pappas, an unassuming yet supremely talented player who knows just when and where to inject colour into the songs, his subtle, inventive playing accounting for the larger proportion of this album's many highlights. Closely following is vocalist/keyboard player Josh Pincus, the perfect foil for Pappas, each feeding off the other magnificently to create a dynamic, oft dramatically hedonistic atmosphere. Add in the rock solid foundations of bassist Arron DiCesare and drummer Hal Aponte, and Ice Age make for one of the most thrilling and exciting new bands of the last five years.

The secret of success in this particular genre is striking the right balance between technical content and accessible songs, no matter how good you are at the former, it doesn't matter one jot if you can't deliver songs that are gonna keep the crowds interested. With that in mind then Ice Age weave a wonderfully compelling set filled with crescendo laden peaks and gently reflective troughs, their diverse transient nature offering a thrilling, edge of your seat kind of ride - check out the pulsating guitar/piano interplay on the instrumental 'Musical Cages' as it twists and turns its way through six and a half minutes of technical heaven, and then contrast that to the short, introspective 'Monolith' which follows.

Like most bands of a similar persuasion, Ice Age don't really go in for your average three minute numbers, most of the songs on 'Liberation' being decidedly longer. Some of the highlights, and as I've said there are many, include the soaring majesty of 'The Guardian Of Forever', the overblown pomp of 'When You're Ready', and the epic 'To Say Goodbye, Part III: Still Here' which continues with the theme set in parts 1 and 2 on the debut. Elsewhere, the swaggering, hook laden opener 'The Lhasa Road (No Surrender)' (which is a damning indictment on the Chinese subjugation of Tibet), has an almost schizophrenic character, reminding at various times of Saga, Rush and Dream Theater; 'The Wolf' has a dark, perhaps slightly more modern edge; whilst both 'The Blood Of Ages' and 'A Thousand Years' are soaring, overblown masterpieces filled with subtle intricacies.

A very rewarding and cerebrally challenging release which should be near the top of most progressive metal shopping lists.

• Dave Cockett

SPRUNG MONKEY
'Get A Taste'
Redline Entertainment, Inc.

This San Diego based oufit have so much ambulence chasing potential, it's unreal. They have all the right ingredients, like Shawn Mullins meeting Blink 182 in an alternative alley. They're ugly and their bad ass appeal is enough to capture the great unwashed who usually represent heavy rock fans.

'Get a Taste' is a surefire hit, it's poptastic mates! It's almost AOR but not really. 'Beautiful' is aggressive pop, the likes of which 'Enuff Z'Nuff' should emulate if they wanna get signed again. 'American Made' is punky with intelligence none of that CC Deville solo nonsense going on here, this is the real McCoy.

'Unexpected' has Blink 182's humour with Loveless style lyrics to boot, does this mean Jonathan Daniel got them a publishing deal because they're under thirty? Elsewhere, 'Everybody Knows Everything' is cool, 'Shut Up' is UK punk in a US body. 'Coconut[the album closer is pure fun.

The key to this band is good vocals and the mixing by Chris 'Hard' Alge who did Fierce Heart. For AOR fans that have moved on.

• Kelv Hellrazer

STEEVI JAIMZ
'Damned If I Do...Damned If I Don't'

This is a compilation of all the material that the man's put out pre-Tigertailz and since hs departure, it's actually his debut CD with a side to Steevi that the press/public don't get to hear. There's more to this guy than the Tigertailz glam days, he's actually influenced more than Ozzy, Frank Marino, Sabbath and Randy Rhoads. The glam comes from Motley Crue.

The wealth of material covers pre-Tigertailz acts China Rogue, Crash KO as well as Tailz rare demos, St Jaimz and War Party. 'Now You're On Your Own' and 'Take It To The Limit' are unreleased gems, especially the later mentioned being the last thing Steevi ever recorded with them. They could have been as big as poison if a major label had signed them. This is the best thing they ever recorded, never mind that 'Beserk' tacky bollocks!

The later Steevi material featuring guitar ace Julian Routen really kicks ass. 'Oneiromancy' is heavy with killer Steve Stevens/Randy Rhoads style riffing and Steevi thinks he's Ozzy Osbourne and probably getting away with it (I'm not an Ozzy fan).

Out of the glam period 'Ragamuffin' is great, as is 'Shaken (Not Stirred)' which is reminiscent of Rated X, Steevi's all time unknown heroes, whilst 'Talk Of The Town' reminds me of Maximum, my unknown heroes. Also worth mentioning is the haunting Crash KO demo 'Sorrows Got Me In A Hold' which is prime NWOBHM style fodder featuring a diaper wearing Ace Finchum (Tigertailz) on drums .

Steevi's gonna be on tour supporting Danny Vaughn, using ex Nitro/my hero/u know what Skinsman KC "Camp" Kasin as well as guitar hero Julian Routen! Catch them and reminisce.

• Kelv Hellrazer

PENDRAGON
'Not Of This World'
Toff Records

March and April proved to be something of a period of rediscovery for me as I became re-acquainted with several bands with whom I have lost touch over the last decade or so. One of these is Pendragon, another in the line of classic British Prog bands. Contemporaries of Marillion they never reached the same heights of popularity or success despite producing several

very good albums.

'Not of This World' is their first studio release since 1996's 'The Masquerade Overture' and comes 23 years after their formation and 16 after the debut album, 'The Jewel'.

Opening number 'If I Were The Wind' starts in the similar vein to Pink Floyd, very atmospheric and featuring that same distinctive chiming guitar sound. When the vocals finally join in there is more than a passing nod at Floyd combined with Steve Hogarth era Marillion. The Floyd references are also there in the next track 'Dance of the Seven Veils' but only after it has passed through a period when the distinctive vocals of Nick Barrett join the party where the guitar sound harks back at 'Wind & Wuthering' period Genesis. The second section of the song has a terrific hook and starts off in jaunty manner before it gives us a reminder of their early days with a Fish-like section. The title track is Marillion's early keyboard sound crossed with Camel's guitar, particularly during its opening section. Very good it is too. There are also some great Floyd-like backing vocals in the mix. Another nice hook is in evidence here during the 'I'm flesh and blood I'm a human being' line.

I won't go on about the remaining tracks because you have probably got the picture as to where Pendragon fit in the scheme of things, but I will say that if you are a follower of British Prog, or indeed Prog in general, you will want this album in your collection. A fine set of songs very well performed with plenty of passion, thought and top quality playing. If, like me, you feel that Marillion have 'dropped the ball' then you'd do worse than climb aboard the Pendragon train. Oh, By the way, the artwork is stunning and adds to the sheer quality of the package. A most pleasing re-introduction to a fine band.

• GARY MARSHALL

HUSH
'Hush II'
Now & Then/Frontiers Records

Bloody hell, here's a blast from the past. Cast your mind back three years and you will remember that this Norwegian bunch released a rather fine debut CD called 'If You Smile' which received critical acclaim for it's influences where very much in the Bad English vein. That same year the band also played The Gods festival alongside Dare and Bob Catley and I can remember their set being very cool. This new album has been a long time coming, I'd almost thought that the band didn't exsist anymore, but I'm happy to report that 'II' is a natural progression from the debut album, still showing influences of Bad English Hush II is a crunchier more melodic record.

They kick off with the mega catchy 'The Restless Ones' which is pure Bad English. You really need to check this song out as it's just completely brilliant. Next up, 'Don't Turn Around' is a calmer melodic rocker with AOR style harmonies. Singer Patrick Simonsen has a voice likened to John Waite and this song highlights that influence, thus the song could have come straight off 'Backlash'. 'Till We Become The Sun' will suprise people, starting off in the vintage American arena rock style - Patrick's voice is so much like David Coverdale crossed with John Waite, and this is one of the best songs on the album, a moody track with a great guitar part from Kenneth Kristiansen which will be magic live. If you close your eyes you can just imagine the video for this song and huge arena crowds swaying in emotion. Great stuff.

The rocking 'Don't Say Goodnight' is next and is again very catchy in the Whitesnake vein, circa 'Slip Of The Tongue' mixed with Bad English, coupled with some fiery axe work from Kennith.

One of my favourite songs is the mega fantastic 'Is It Good Enough?' which is a keyboard, melodic driven AOR piece which is perfect for summertime radio and once the tongue in cheek chorus hits you'll be singing from the first listen.

'Another Girl' is a superb bouncy summertime AOR while next up is the melodic ballad called 'Forever' echoing Whitesnake comparisons mainly due to Patrick's exquisite Coverdale/Wharton vocals. This song is perhaps my favourite on the record because it's different from the rest and has a vintage classic rock feel, and is by no means a wimpy AOR ballad as there is some great axe work during the bridge. 'Like Love' sounds like the Bryan Adams song 'When I'm Gone' and is very catchy, whilst Hush blast back into their melodic hard rock roots with the utterly fantastic 'The Real Thing'. The band sound so much better when they're pumped up like this and we witness another great number that will go down well, a song that mixes Whitesnake with Sons Of Angels and Bad English's 'Best Of What I Got'...great vocals on this one.

Lastly, 'In My Dreams' finishes the album as it started is a fantastic catchy AOR rocker with some really strong vocal harmonies and heavy keyboards, kinda like Savannah, Bad English and RTZ.

I recommend this release as it's totally fantastic and really suprised me as it is much much stronger than the debut and Hush sound much much tighter and confident. The band will be play ing the Gods in November. See yer there folks!!

• NICK BALDRIAN

GINA'S ALCHEMY
The Magic Vol. 1
Sisyphus Records
ALCHEMY VII
Alchemy VII
Starhawk Records

"What a tremendous voice," I thought when Bruce first played me the opening, title track of the first of these two albums. You can hear for yourselves why I was hooked into offering to review both of them, as 'The Magick' is featured on this issue's sampler CD. Gina Citoli must certainly rank as one of the genres great new female vocalist finds on the evidence here presented. But as you will read from the short article elsewhere in this issue, getting the album out to the right audience has proved to be quite a struggle.

Both albums feature thoughtful, powerful, female-fronted melodic rock music. The Magick is a conceptual, ethereal and probably life-enhancing work and which focuses upon the spirit of the human race ("life is an art, so be intentional"), the possibilities that we can unlock ("through the dreamtime door"), having an environmental consciousness and awareness ("do you hear the Earth sing? Can you hear her calling to you?") and encouraging the best from each and every one of us ("live your life with inspiration and make your life a celebration.....believe in yourself, and you will find your way").

It is enthralling, intoxicating stuff once you get the message. I must admit that initially I felt that it had curiosity value only, but over the past couple of months repeated plays have certainly paid dividends, and I am sure will continue to do so.

The title track leads straight into 'The Alchemist' and this maintains both the sonic quality and the focus of the message. The backing vocals here - and elsewhere on the album - are a really strong part of the overall sound and envelope Gina Citoli's voice sympathetically. There is also a first opportunity for guitarist Steve Lundberg to let loose. The mood then changes for the more introspective 'Eyes of a Child', another tremendous vehicle for Gina's superb vocals. 'Magick in the Mirror' begins as a gentle song about getting rid of unnecessary baggage in one's journey through life but builds into an uptempo staccato structure that incorporates a rather fuzzy guitar sound in the solo from Steve Lundberg.

'The Moon Tune' also begins rather quietly, but the fuzzy guitar (which I rather like) soon returns. What I am less keen on is the rather jazzy interlude that develops and then progresses into a rather discordant mid-section. Next up comes the four-part, rather progressive 'Earth Song' that lasts nearly nine minutes and is the longest track on the album. This is a real tour-de-force that begins with cascading rhythms and a strong percussive element. This percussive element really comes to the fore in the third part and features a ritualistic chant led by Gina and responded to by the backing vocalists. The last part brings a re-visitation of the earlier themes with more urgent full band support, though with percussion still to the front of the mix. 'A Thousand Years of Peace' is a song of hope for the new Millennium and again showcases Gina's voice wonderfully.

The two tracks that close this album ('Dancer' and 'Celebration') are both up-tempo work-outs and show the quality of the ensemble playing by the band that in addition to guitarist Steve Lundberg features James Walsh on Keyboards, Sue Birch on bass and Carl Wergyn on drums. By the way, it took me quite a while to place the other female vocalist of whose voice Gina's reminded me. Her vocals at the start of 'Earth Song' were the clincher for me - it is Grace Slick - and indeed, the more I have listened to the album, the more I find myself associating the two vocalists.

The production and sound quality are both excellent throughout, and I rate this as a really strong debut album from a hitherto "unknown band". It is an album that should please many of you who, like me, favour female-fronted bands.

I am, however, far less sure about the eponymously-titled Alchemy VII. This is really only a 'mini-album' clocking in as it does at only just over 30 minutes, and displays a far more diverse range of styles across the seven songs that are included here. I do not feel that the production is as crisp or precise as on The Magick and Gina's voice therefore seems to come through with less clarity on many of the tracks, although Gina still delivers a storming performance throughout: commencing with 'Aradia' this is, however, a curate's egg of a track!

The album features new keyboard player Marshall Davis and he has provided the music for two of the tracks - 'Need More' and 'Shape Shifter'. The former begins with guitar feedback, heavy bass and drum beat and strident guitar chords. When Gina's voice appears, the reality dawns: this could be Siouxse & The Banshees! This is followed by 'Natural Order Of Things' and is of a style that would not be out of place in a smoky New

Operatic Bombast!

STRATOVARIUS
'Intermission'
Nuclear Blast

MY ADMIRATION for Finnish (Okay, three fifths Finnish) tech-metal sensations Stratovarius has been amply attested to over the past five years or so, so you'll have to forgive me for being more than a little partisan as I approach 'Intermission, an album which appears on first glance to be a sort of 'odds and sods' release. *My first exposure to the band came via 96's phenomenal 'Episode' album (their fifth), an album which put them so far ahead of the chasing pack at the time that any attempt at meaningful comparison was kind of redundant before it even got off the ground - Stratovarius were innovators not followers, my by then somewhat jaded faith in a scene which seemed incapable of recovering from the body blow dealt it by the onset of grunge, suddenly and miraculously restored.*

For the past half a dozen years or so, indeed ever since the release of their 'Fourth Dimension' opus (the album which immediately preceded 'Episode', and the one which introduced the remarkable operatic vocal talents of Timo Kotipelto to the world at large), the band have been on one long, constant round of album/tour/album; never really having time to pause for breath or gather their thoughts. Now though, as has been well publicised elsewhere, the band are about to embark on an extended sabbatical to recharge those batteries and catch up with all the things they've missed out on. Stratovarius being Stratovarius however want to bow out, albeit if temporarily, with a bang rather than a whimper, thus the idea for 'Intermission' was born.

Rather than ask their fans to shell out for an essentially 'Greatest Hits' set with the odd bonus track thrown in as a sweetener (which is what their former label did a couple of years back anyway), the band have pieced together a unique collection of new songs, covers, and previously unreleased (over here at least) tracks as a thank you to the people who've showed remarkable loyalty. Great idea lads.

Fittingly, the four new songs which appear on 'Intermission' are all right at the very beginning, and for those fans like myself who love the moodier, slower moments just as much as the supersonic speed metal, opening salvo 'Will My Soul Ever Rest In Peace' and 'Falling Into Fantasy' make a pleasant change to the bombastic, overblown initial assault we're perhaps more used to. The first is a power ballad in fine '4,000 Rainy Night's' tradition, whilst the latter is an at times reflective number with a real brooding undercurrent which turns out to be one of the best things they've written in quite a while. However, it wouldn't be Stratovarius if the temperature didn't hit the roof from time to time, and 'The Curtains Are Falling' is atypical, kerosene fuelled rifferama. Final new track 'Requiem' is a brief, gothically tinged instrumental.

With the new stuff tucked out of the way, it's then the turn of the covers with the band offering up spirited renditions of Priest's 'Bloodstone', and two Rainbow cuts - 'Kill The King' and 'I Surrender'. Good versions all, but hardly essential. However, what is worth the admission price alone is the liberal sprinkling of mainly Japan only bonus tracks which grace the latter half of the album - 'Why Are We Here?', 'What Can I Say', and 'When The Night Meets The Day' being especially memorable. (Again, most of these showing the more mature side of the band's songwriting).

In many respects, 'Intermission' is as good and consistent as their normal studio albums, and as such is so much more than a mere gap filler - hurry back guys, missing you already!

• *DAVE COCKETT*

Orleans drinking establishment! Next up is the aforementioned 'Shape Shifter' and this is a song that we can all enjoy, sounding as it does like something that Survivor might have recorded. 'Forever' follows, and this is the only track that is remotely similar to anything on The Magick. This is an introspective love song about "this reality and beyond". The rather lightweight 'Follow The Eagle' and jazz-funk of "In Your Name" complete what for me is a very bewildering listening experience.

However, I await with interest The Magick Vol. 2 which is - as you will read elsewhere in this issue - the next project that the band is writing and recording, as I hope it will mark a return to the form of the really excellent Vol. 1.

• PAUL JEROME SMITH

VARIOUS
'Rock The Nations'
Z Records

You can tell that summer's on the way, evenings get decidedly longer whilst hemlines get tantalisingly shorter, there's the sound of willow striking leather (that's cricket to you 'an me guv), beer needs twice as long to cool in the fridge...and there's a sudden influx of sampler CD's eager to promote a labels wares over the holiday period, offering a round up of the best of recent output and a teasing glimpse of things to come. Recently, we've had pretty good examples of the genre from both MTM and Now & Then/Frontiers, and now it's the turn of Z Records to seduce the listener with a 34 track, two CD set.

As you'd expect, there's a mixture of stuff on offer - some good, some not so good - the greater proportion of it drawn from the Z release schedule over the last 9 months or so, with enough unreleased material to make it interesting to those who already own most of those available releases covered.

Starting with the stuff that's already in the market place then, this too can be sub divided into two categories - the stuff signed directly to the label, and that which is licensed. Of the latter, 21 Guns (with 'Nothing's Real'), Badlands (with 'Healer'), and the wonderful Burning Rain (you're spoilt for choice here with a track off both album's) are essential listening and should be top of any classic hard rock fans wants list if you don't already own them. (Indeed, I have it on good authority that Burning Rain have now actually signed for a third album with recording already well advanced - can't wait). Prophet fans also get a double helping with tracks from their classic reissues, including the timeless 'Sound Of A Breaking Heart' from their 'Cycle Of The Moon' magnum opus.

Moving on to the stuff signed directly, Von Groove chip in with the wonderfully addictive 'Lily' from their recent 'The Seventh Day' opus (in my opinion their best since 'Mission Man'), there's two mouth watering tracks from the excellent Prisoner (again, one culled from each album - despite what the album sleeve would have you believe), 'Kay' from the equally brilliant Rainmaker...and a whole host of other worthy cuts too numerous to detail from the likes of Arabia, Dreamhunter, Seven Wishes, Damned Nation, Eclipse (great Europe soundalikes if you haven't picked the album up yet) and Pontus Norgren.

Like I said earlier though, it's the unreleased stuff that will be of interest to Z afficianados. Of these, there's three cuts on the second disc that get my vote as pick of the bunch, namely the sprawling blues rock of 'Breathe On Me' from Friction, the punchy 'Love You Too Much' from the reunited Sons of Angels, and the atmospheric power ballad 'Tell Me' from Sweden's Aces High (definitely more debut album than the disappointing 'Pull No Punches'). Shy fans will be pleased to hear that the rough mix of 'No Other Way' sounds like classic 'Excess All Areas', whilst Danny Danzi fans will no doubt enjoy the punchy stadium rocker 'Eternity'. The Liddell Rush Thrall track 'Laydown The Law' also sounds promising, although I'm not too sure about the vocals as yet. On the downside, I wasn't overly impressed with the resurrected Tygers Of Pan Tang, and the Shyanne track 'Better Days' was a somewhat insipid ballad.

All in all, it's been a good few months for sampler releases, and this is no exception. There's the odd duffer, but I haven't come across one yet that doesn't throw up at least two or three. Great value for money, especially if you're still missing out on one or two from the recent back catalogue.

• DAVE COCKETT

Lost And Found!

DAVID GLENN EISLEY
'The Lost Tapes'
Now & Then/Frontiers

NOW HERE'S an interesting one. I view the Giuffria/House Of Lords thing in the same way that I view the Dave Lee Roth/Sammy Hagar situation, even though I loved them both and James Christian is technically the better singer, the Daves were the spirit of rock and roll. *Also, anyone who's seen the Giuffria Live In Japan video will tell you that Mr Eisley had stage moves that made Dave Lee Roth look like...er, someone who doesn't move about a lot. Don Dokken maybe!*

Some of this collection of unreleased material is taken from David's Dirty White Boy days, but of most interest are the demos of nine tracks that were intended to make up Giuffria III. It's now part of history that the line-up of Eisley, keyboard player Gregg Giuffria, bassist Chuck Wright, guitarist Lanny Cordola and drummer Ken Mary were taken under the wing of one Gene Simmons. The first thing Gene did was insist on a change of name and a new singer, but just before that happened these 9 songs were recorded, and it's unbelievable that 6 of them were never used, until now. Coupled with the fact that the Dirty White Boy songs wipe the floor with anything on their debut album, it makes this one fine collection of tunes.

The songs suggest that the band were going in a more rocking direction, with only two ballads and the most upbeat good-time melodic hard rock of David's career. Kicking off with 'Stand Up', a mid-paced hard rocker which was dissected to make up much of 'Hearts Of The World', it has much of the dynamics that went on to be the House Of Lords trademark with an awesome rhythm section and Cordola squealing for all he's worth.

'Are You Ready' is an old stage favourite from the Craig Goldy days, and is another rocker with a catchy riff and more than it's fair share of majestic swagger. 'Shot Down In Love' is the third piece of the puzzle and amply demonstrates why US bands do this kind of stuff better than anyone else. Those little instrumental touches that each member brings to the table making sure that there's never a lull in the proceedings, and the organ solo is just great.

The slightly poppier 'Don't Turn Away From Love' has more prominent keys than the opening trio, but never falls back into wimphem, until 'Slip Of The Tongue' livens things up with a very similar version to the House Of Lords one. It's hard to believe that Eisley did most of these songs in one take!

A quartet of Dirty White Boy songs starts with 'The Ballad', a melodic bluesy song that doesn't sound as far away from Giuffria as you would think. Dave's voice is more similar to the Giuffria albums than the DWB, and Earl Slick's guitar is pretty melodic too. If that was a bit of a surprise, then 'Lay Down Your Love' is far more AOR than anything else they ever did, with the song riding along on Slick's gritty guitar and Keni Richards' pounding drums. 'Back Of My Hand' is more typical of the heavy blues of DWB, but a good song with a staccato riff all the same, while 'Boot Hill Blues' is a live Rory Gallagher style blues romp which is not only strangely infectious, but also gives the album a bit of variety.

The only song that leans towards the lighter side of Giuffria is the ballad 'One Love', which has some nice fretless bass and a bit of a 'Call To The Heart' vibe, while 'Jealous Heart' isn't really much different from the HOL version apart from slightly more prominent keys. 'Golden Town' just proved my Dave Lee Roth analogy by being a dead-ringer for 'Goin' Crazy', a massively enjoyable good-time rocker in the best tradition with superb guitar and keyboard touches.

The album ends with 'Pleasure Palace', one of House Of Lords best known songs that sounds basically the same with the same arrangement, except the keys are more prominent again and Gregg comes in at slightly different moments which sounds a little odd. The playing on the whole album is just so good, especially Ken Mary who's just fantastic, and even on the familiar HOL tunes David Glen Eisley's voice sounds totally natural and after a while you don't notice the difference.

Sound-wise these are only demos, but I've heard much worse from major label stuff, and these guys probably spent more money on their demos than most bands spend on their entire careers. Giuffria III would have been a great album then, and this is a great album now. Essential!

• PHIL ASHCROFT

VIC LECAR'S BLUE MOON
'Vic Lecar's Blue Moon'
Record Heaven Music

Don't know much about Vick Lecar's history, but as far as the music is concerned this album is simply a hugely satisfying blues based hard rock record. The best song for me without a doubt was the amazing 'Between Heaven And Hell'. I had Ted Poley from Melodica say a few things about this song for me and he said 'This has a cool Hendrix influenced intro, heavy guitar riff, then into really nice vocals with cool blues riffs mixed real high and in your face, where it should be. Kind of 70's in places. Very cool heavy blues', and he is dead correct as this song is just so crucial, it's sounds full of energy yet retains a degree of freshness which it makes it such an earthshattering song as does 'One More Shot' which has a similar bluesey vibe with really husky vocals.

Most of the album is actually like this song...blues-based hard rock in which you can hear hints of Whitesnake and Deep Purple, such as on the catchy 'Turn And Burn', 'Son Of A Witch' and the completely inspiring 'Never Stranded' (Burning Rain eat your heart out)...just check out that swirling bluesy riff.

There is a smouldering ballad called 'Take My Hand' which is just huge and is like vintage Whitesnake whilst 'Run Like A River' is a fun bluesy swagger and Vick goes back to basis rock 'n' roll funkiness on 'In New York City' which reminds me Stevie Salas and Robert Plant. All in all this album hits hard and is very hard to ignore.

• NICK BALDRIAN

HURRICANE
'Liquifury'
Now & Then/Frontiers Records

One of many comeback albums on the N&T/Frontiers label by fairly well-known bands, the question was asked 'Will it sound like Hurricane, or Unruly Child?'. The Union 4 sampler track 'Heart Made Of Stone' suggested that the results would be somewhere in-between, but the reality is that this is pretty heavy and a far cry from the Kelly Hansen version of Unruly Child.

Kelly and drummer Jay Schellen have been joined by Unruly Child bassist Larry Antonio and guitarist Sean Manning to produce an album that has many of the hallmarks of the late '80's/early '90's L.A. metal scene but with some modern touches in the production and instrumentation. Add the golden voice of Kelly Hansen, singing as melodically as he always has, and you have a pretty interesting mix.

'River Of Gold' is a medium-fast rocking opener with riffs that are somewhere between Thin Lizzy's 'Are You Ready' and Mr Big's 'Drill Song', but through it all Kelly weaves an almost pop-like melody. When this is laid over the thumping bass and Jay Schellen's busy drums the effect is similar to old Hurricane but has other things in there that are harder to pin down. The next-up, 'New God' has Sean's guitar playing Mike Inez' bassline from 'No More Tears', I know that sounds weird but when you hear it you'll know exactly what I mean. Slightly slower, the song has all the Hurricane vocal lines and harmonies, but with a more modern twist, and still rocks.

You should all be familiar with 'Heart Made Of Stone' which is a little more lightweight than the opening duo with a soaring vocal and neat guitar solo. Manning's guitar is pretty understated for the most part, he seems content to crank out the riffs and add colour and shade to the songs rather than impress with chops. Definitely closer to Robert Sarzo than Doug Aldrich but sounds like he's his own man too. There's a bit of the old Hurricane groove thing on 'It's Your Life', but just when you've gotten into the cool guitar riff and lazy vibe it speeds up to a frantic rocker before slowing down again to the end.

The maturity of the band is evident in the haunting keyboard intro to 'Happy To Be', a slower and lighter track with a hint of blues, the guitar comes crashing in for a typical Hurricane chorus. The performance of Kelly Hansen on this is up there with 'It's Only Heaven' from the debut mini-LP, that song is the closest relative I can think of although this has more guitar.

'Bleed For Me' is a little different with some definite pop overtones and an odd rhythm, but is quality songwriting at it's best. No matter how untypical the music gets Kelly voice anchors everything in Hurricane territory, with a catchy chorus or a soaring bridge. 'Shelter' is more of the same, an aggressive funky verse with a chorus that would fit into The Chart Show without raising your Grandma's eyebrow. These two songs are so tunefully

THE ITALIAN STYLE TO

MUSIC ON LINE
FRONTIERS RECORDS

MELODIC HARD ROCK

HURRICANE

The Blasting Come Back !!!

Lead Vocals: Kelly Hansen
Drums : Jay Schellen
Bass : Larry Antonino
Guitars: Sean Manning

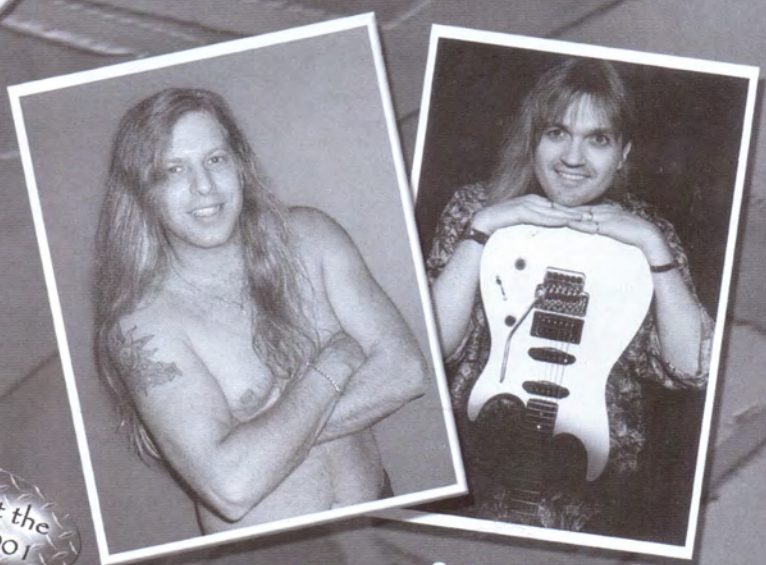
September 2001

liquifury

MELODIA

LOVE METAL

August the 20th 2001



Ted Poley
(ex Danger-Danger)

Gerhard Pichler

THE AMAZING RETURN OF
THE MELODIC ROCK GODS !!!

NOW & THEN

Frontiers Records are marketed in the UK by
Now & Then Productions and distributed by Cargo Records.

CARGO RECORDS

sung that at first you don't even notice the dirty guitar sound.

The only ballad is 'In My Dreams' on which Hansen comes across like Freddy Curci at his best, on an utterly fabulous tune with a cool melodic guitar solo with no flashiness about it whatsoever, just clean notes played with feeling.

To twist your perception completely on it's head, 'Torn' is almost nu-breed power-pop with a jangly verse and some no nonsense arrangements, pure melody with the minimum of fuss and a maximum of passion. 'Shine' ends the album in fine style, another slightly funky workout with the bass well to the fore and harmonies all over the place with Hansen doing a passable Glenn Hughes at the end.

Song-wise this is a very strong album indeed and Hansen in particular shines like the star that he is, it's not exactly typical Hurricane but the vocals make it sound that way. Hurricane haven't changed enough to alienate their existing fans and to anyone who was worried, they're still an energetic hard rock band with a superb vocalist and a neat line in excellent songs. Welcome back!

• PHIL ASHCROFT

VINNIE VINCENT INVASION
'All Systems Go'
Zoom Club

Another timely re-issue from Zoom Club, the 2nd Vinnie Vincent album was becoming quite scarce, and was one of the CD's I had stolen years ago, and hadn't seen for a reasonable price since. Not that you care, you just want to know if it's any good or not, yes?

If you read my review of the 1st album in a previous issue, you'll know that that I'm quite partial to Vinnie Vincent's particular view of how rock'n'roll should be played. As a guitarist he walks the fine line between virtuosity and mess, but as a songwriter he has the knack of creating tunes that entice you in and then bludgeon you over the head with over the top guitar and vocal histrionics. After the departure of Robert Fleishmann, Vinnie's search for a stratospheric soaring vocalist, or a singer with a high voice, whichever came first, led him to launch the career of a young Mark Slaughter. Not only could Slaughter reach the notes that Fleishmann had recorded on the first album, he could sing even higher ones on this one.

Opening with 'Ashes To Ashes' it's immediately obvious that Vinnie has not only found the perfect singer to complement his manic screeching guitar, but had also given his songs one or two nods back to classic rock territory with a riff very similar to Zeppelin/Whitesnake (depending on your age). It's one of those kitchen sink songs with many different riffs, backward vocals, lots of time changes and one of the most ridiculously overblown guitar solos you'll ever hear, like Steve Stevens on speed. There are some excellent and some pretty average songs on the rest of the album, but nothing quite lives up to that opening song, especially if you suffer from Attention Deficit Syndrome.

'Dirty Rhythm' and 'Naughty, Naughty' are pretty basic cock-rock given the double V treatment, while the ballad 'Love Kills' as well as being a great song, has some guitar overdubs that Tom Scholz would have been proud of. 'Burn' has a simple but killer riff, as does 'Let Freedom Rock', both medium-fast rockers and both have the wall of high harmonies that punctuate much of this album.

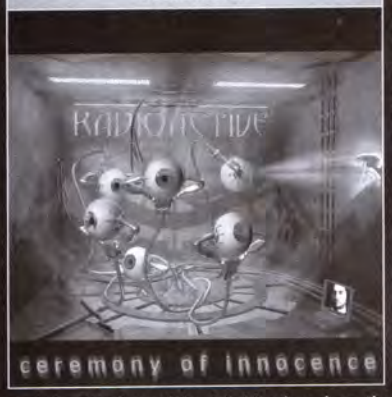
As with the first album there are a few glorious ventures in AOR territory, a style which Vinnie can carry off with some aplomb. 'That Time Of Year' is a multi-layered melody explosion (am I starting to sound like Paul Diamond?) which has a great tune, and Vinnie and Mark lay off the excess for the entire duration. 'Heavy Pettin' unfortunately has an unspectacular chorus that doesn't live up to the gorgeous verse, and Vinnie actually opts for subtle and tasteful over fast and frenzied on 'Ecstacy', another pleasant AOR tune. 'Deeper And Deeper' is another tuneful outing that has some of the oddest key changes I've ever heard, which just leaves 'Breakout', a fast rocker that for some reason reminds me of Dokken's 'Tooth And Nail' and is back to the excesses of the debut. Again the album is a little heavy on the treble and light on Dana Strum's bass and Bobby Rock's drums, but that's obviously how Vinnie wanted it.

On the whole this is a slightly more song orientated album than the previous one, although it doesn't have the shock factor that VVI did. The band fell apart after doing some 3rd album demos and half of them became Slaughter, but what Vinnie Vincent is up to now is anyone's guess.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

Handle With Care!

RADIOACTIVE
'Ceremony Of Innocence'
MTM Music



USUALLY, ALBUMS that stretch the creative process out over a decade or more are reserved for the likes of Boston, so those unfamiliar with the story behind Radioactive might be more than a little surprised to learn that 'Ceremony Of Innocence' actually started life way back at the dawn of the last decade. *Back then, the then relatively unknown Tommy Denander was signed to Sony in his native Sweden, and full of youthful impetuousness he asked the guys from Toto if they'd appear as his backing band on his first solo effort. Somewhat amazingly they all agreed, and so started one of the longest running soap operas in the recent history of rock 'n' roll.*

Although Denander and the Toto boys did a fair bit of work on the album at the time, the body blow dealt the melodic rock scene by the rise of Nirvana saw a radical policy reappraisal by Sony which resulted in the idea being shelved indefinitely. Undaunted, Denander swore to complete the project on his own, determining that it would not see the light of day until he was completely happy with the end results, something reinforced by the untimely death of Jeff Porcaro in 1992. And so here we are, some ten years later, and having further enlisted the help of such additional luminaries as Fee Waybill (The Tubes), Michael Thompson, Bruce Gaitsch, and Chicago's Jason Scheff , 'Ceremony Of Innocence' is now deemed suitable for public consumption.

Given the past pedigree of the undeniably impressive list of names involved, there's no prizes for guessing that this release is aimed primarily at the AOR market. Harder edged than his work on things like Saylt, yet smoother and more polished than either Prisoner or Rainmaker, Radioactive proves to be one of the most instantly addictive releases of it's type since the fine sophomore effort from Street Talk.. As regular readers will know, formula AOR isn't normally my first choice of listening material, but when it's delivered with the style and sophistication inherent in 'Ceremony Of Innocence', you just have to sit up and take notice.

Subtly orchestrated, and drenched in emotion, 'Ceremony Of Innocence' has certainly been worth the wait. Kicking off with the bubbling, slightly pompous opener 'The Story Of Love' (featuring current Prisoner/Rainmaker colleague Gerr Ronning on vocals), the thirteen tracks herein prove to be amongst the finest pure AOR Denander has had a hand in so far. The combination of Ronning's, soulful, blues tinged vocals and bright, pretentious guitar/keyboard interplay make this one track you'll want to keep coming back to over and over again. Continuing with the upbeat theme, 'Crimes Of Passion' (with the inimitable voice of Bobby Kimball) is another great slice of catchy melodic rock - kinda Red Dawn lite with Toto overtones maybe - great sprawling guitar solo too

And that early promise pretty much continues throughout the rest of the album. From the infectious mid paced rocker 'On My Own' (the first of two tracks fronted by Fergie Frederiksen), through the deceptively seductive Richard Marx/Bruce Gaitsch penned ballad 'Haunt Me Tonight', to the gently anthemic sophistication of title track 'Ceremony Of Innocence', this is filled to overflowing with the kind of hook laden AOR fans of the genre voraciously dream about, but rarely find so readily available.

In a nutshell, 'Ceremony Of Innocence' is the essential item in this summer's AOR collection.

• *DAVE COCKETT*

AMSTERDAM
'Amsterdam'
Metal Mayhem

Amsterdam are probably west coast based, which I can only assume because there is little info to go on the CD - Metal Mayhem!! Hey chaps, howza bout band family trees/histories with these CD's you're putting out? Everybody knows about Keel already.

They look dangerously safe LA/AOR, not daring enough for the full transvestite Ruby Slippers image. I will have to confirm with LA's main source of info Christy Lawrence, guitarist out of Black on Blond. If he don't know ya, ya ain't worth knowing. I reckon there's a network or magic connection although the guy trying to push the rest of his band mates into the background is a Ted Poley clone on hormone tablets.

Musically they fall between Stryper, Van Halen, and Firehouse and are not as easy/cheesey to pigeon hole as label mates No respect. Guitarist's Chad Foster and Eric Morrison mimic Eddie VH and Christy Lawerence especially on cuts 'Sex Emotion', 'Mine All Mine' and 'Cannibalistic Love'. 'Gett Off' is very Crywolf with a Wratchchild style bish bosh. 'Head High' wants to be Van Halen but ends up as Bullet Boys. Where's the cliched ballad guys? 'I'm Alright' features some great Dave Lee Roth style vocals.

It's definitely a case of it's not the same band but it's still the same guys!!

• KELV HELLRAZER

ERIC JOHNSON
'Double Jeopardy'
Favoured Nations

Not an artist with a prolific back catalogue, so it was not until a few years ago that the name Eric Johnson began to scratch my consciousness. I guess that it was the G3 tour (with Messrs Satriani and Vai) and the subsequent live album that my interest in this virtuoso guitarist from Austin, Texas (where the album now under review was recorded) began to be aroused.

His first studio recordings were laid down in late 1976 and early 1978, but the album Seven Worlds that these comprised did not see the light of day until 1998! Tones appeared in 1986 and incorporated re-recordings of two of the tracks that would eventually appear on Seven Worlds: 'Zap' and 'Emerald Eyes'. The tracks on these albums showcased the various influences to which he had been exposed in his formative years: blues, jazz/fusion, r&b, latino and rock but also demonstrated very clearly his own styles. Thus on the one hand there are blistering, free-flowing solos whilst on the other there are altogether more mellow, introspective and controlled passages. And he's a pretty darned fine vocalist too, in my opinion: just listen to 'Trail of Tears' on Tones and you will immediately hear testimony to this perspective.

But it was Johnson's 'mid-period' recordings (Ah Via Musicom from 1990 and Venus Isle from 1996) that really hooked me into the quality mixture of atmospheric instrumental tracks and songs. Venus Isle is an absolute peach of an album (once past the opening minute and three quarters of the opening, title track) and I strongly recommend that the more broad-minded readers of this magazine so far unacquainted with Eric Johnson give it an early listen if you can.

So what about the current release? Well, if Venus Isle can be regarded as a gazelle, Live & Beyond is a hippopotamus!! It has very definite charms and features some immense playing, but it is not the natural successor to what has gone before, and is therefore quite a different animal. It is in any case, as the album's title suggests, a mainly live outing (only the final track 'World Of Trouble' coming from a new studio session). The live material on offer has not previously been recorded by Johnson and includes seven new compositions by him (one, 'Last House on the Block' is a joint composition with Bill Maddox, percussionist and drummer of the Alien Love Child trio). The remaining member of Alien Love Child is bassist Chris Maresh - who also contributes one composition - 'Rain' which is a moody mid-paced instrumental that almost qualifies as 'smooth jazz'. It is not my favourite track on the album.

At the heart of the album are two blues-laden tracks 'Once A Part Of Me' and 'Don't Cha Know' on which soulful bluesman Malford Milligan takes a guest spot centre-stage and provides passionate vocals. The blues/boogie instrumental "The Boogie King" (a tribute to John Lee Hooker) follows and completes a section of the album that took me back to my blues-loving teenage years in the mid-1960s and allowed me regressive celebration! 'Last House on the Block' is my favourite track on the album and permitted similar celebration - this time to the late 60's - and develops into an 11+ minute workout that is highly reminiscent of extended material recorded by that era's 'supergroup', Cream. The comparatively short (at 3 minutes) 'Enzo's Shuffle' is driven ZZ Top-style, whilst opener 'Zenland and later offerings 'Elevator Sky Movie' and 'Shape I'm In' are tracks that find the trio operating closer to the style of some of Johnson's earlier works.

I have seen this album described as "power trio styled hard-edged rock with a decided blues vibe" and feel that this is a fairly appropriate categorisation. I enjoy good music across a broad musical spectrum and this disc will undoubtedly receive occasional plays

from me in the future. As for you, dear reader, if you can relate to the mix of styles identified, then go and get it. If not - at least heed my recommendation about 'Venus Isle' which you should be able to find at mid-price, as that really is indispensable!

• Paul Jerome Smith

VARIOUS ARTISTS
'Union Volume 4'
Now & Then Frontierd

Go and buy it! Okay, so that will hardly do as a review, but for goodness sake, over 150 minutes of (mainly) excellent music spread across 2 CDs for £4.99 (or thereabouts) must be the bargain of the year! It was largely through the availability of such samplers that I really became aware of the excellent MHR, AOR, Metal and Prog Rock that was available, but of which I had largely no prior knowledge. Magazines such as Frontiers and Hard Roxx plus the various record labels that issued samplers in the 1996/97 period did much to help extend my knowledge of a "hidden" music scene. I have not looked back since, and have yet to buy a sampler that has not led me on to some exquisite purchases.

Now, I am in the fortunate position of having many of the already available CDs represented here. But nevertheless, I was still surprised by the quality of the track from Voodoo Hill - 'Sensitive'. I am not a fan of Glenn Hughes (sorry!) and had written off that particular release. Perhaps I was wrong to be prejudiced! You may have reached similar conclusions about CDs from some of the other acts included here, Bailey's Comet, for instance. Well just you listen to their 'One Love, One Life' opus. It's rather tasty - and so is the rest of their album in my opinion. So now is your chance to assess a whole phalanx of recent issues from Now & Then/Frontiers by actually listening to the music! All the usual suspects are featured: Ten, Bob Catley, Emerald Rain, Millenium as well as tracks from other, newer, well-reviewed releases such as Seventh Key, Terry Brock and Kelly Keagy. You might also wish to check out Ian Ashley Hersey, Teer, Prime Time and David Glen Eisley.

However, that is only part of the story, because what makes this a real gem is the battalion of tracks from forthcoming releases - many of them mixes or versions that will not be quite the same as on the issued albums. The stuff of collectability indeed! In particular I would point you to the tracks by Urban Tale, Giant, Hardline and Hurricane, and don't be put off by the strangely named bands Bourgeois Pigs and Monkeyhead. Their representative tracks have certainly left me wishing to hear more.

Samplers like this tend to earn their keep twice over. Initially in providing an introduction to new stuff you might wish to buy and then later on as really excellent choices to put on the hi-fi at party time. Have you noticed how some tracks get the guests asking what they are? And then bob's your uncle, and more people go out and buy the CDs...

Or am I dreaming?

• Paul Jerome Smith

TEMPLAR
'Come To Light'
Independent

Being a massive Magnum fan, I immediately went out and bought Saracen's debut album 'Heroes, Saints & Fools' back in 1981 when reading of the comparisons in the press. I loved that album. The sound wasn't so great, but the songs had an epic quality and lyrical content that appealed to my youthful ears. The follow up was a massive disappointment, in main due to the departure of main songwriter/lead guitarist Rob Bendelow. Now almost twenty years later we have the first solo project from Bendelow, "Come To the Light', recorded under the Templar monicker. Joining him on this project are erstwhile Saracen colleagues Steve Bettney and Jason Gardner, Jason's wife Lorraine, Rob's 16 year old son Richard and various other friends.

Musically, the album is very close to Saracen of old, though the addition of Lorraine's lead vocals on several tracks makes for a distinctive alternative to Steve's and Jason's more hard rocking tones. There are three instrumentals on the album, including a wonderful reworking of the Saracen classic, 'Dolphin Ride', and 'Swords of Damascus' which is pure 'Heroes...' Saracen. My favourite tracks are the evocative 'Faith', which simply bleeds emotion, and has a storming chorus that brings to mind Magnum at their peak. 'Angel Eyes' start with haunting wind pipes, and sees a duet being perform between Steve and Lorraine. I'm not convinced about the arrangement of the verses, or Lorraine's deep vocal, but the chorus is one of the most beautiful and passionate I have heard in years.

Other songs include the hard-rocking opener 'On the Rockface' and seven minute plus workout of 'Just Me and My Flying V', plus a cover of the George Harrison classic 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps'. Of course, it wouldn't be a Bendelow album without an epic track, and here we finish on the ten minute epic 'Come to the Light', a fantastical musical description of passing through the event horizon of a black hole, featuring classical guitar, haunting sax solos and moody oration! Simply inspirational.

Those keeping up with the new on the web will know that this album has directly lead to the reformation of Saracen, a new album of which is currently being worked upon. A full interview with Rob will appear in the next issue. For further information on this wonderful album, check out www.templarmusic.co.uk.

• Bruce Mee

AVIARY
'Aviary'
Rewind/Sony

Aviary were a 5 piece band from the US whose sole album came out on the Epic label in 1979, and for once I'm going to forego all the history that I usually waffle about in my re-issue reviews, for reasons I will disclose later. Based around the mercurial songwriting and vocal prowess of Brad Love, Aviary come from a time when originality was not only commonplace, but was actually encouraged, even by record companies.

The music contained in these nine songs is not recommended for the unadventurous, or people with an aversion to grandiose pomp. If you are a fan of the first five Queen albums, Supertramp, and/or clever pop by the likes of 10cc or Sparks, then this may be right up your street. The instrumentation is reminiscent of 70's prog bands, but without any of long meanderings of the genre (not that I mind such things!), and the songs are (mostly) under five minutes and cover many different styles, usually in the same song. Intrigued? The problem when reviewing something like this is that there is no way that any combination of words could accurately describe it, but here goes...

The aptly named 'Soaring' is based on some strange chord sequences in the same way as, say, Queen's 'Death On Two Legs', with a piano based verse taking you up to lush harmonies that have to be heard to be believed. Add an inventive rhythm section with a drummer who rolls around his kit at every opportunity, some almost Genesis-like keyboards, an orchestra, some searing guitar leads, and I didn't even mention the vocals yet. Brad Love has an original style that ranges from overly dramatic to plaintively simple, and he plays keyboards too, along with Paul Madden. He sounds nothing like Freddie Mercury, but the charisma level is about the same.

'Anthem For The USA' is a little more straight-forward with a bouncing poppy verse and almost normal rock chorus, but it's those little bits and pieces that they put into the harmonies and instrumentation that produces a magic moment every few seconds. Guitarist Toby Bowen does some sterling stuff on this as well, nothing flash, just the perfect tone to embellish the song.

Just so things don't get too normal, 'Puddles' is like nothing I could possibly describe. Love's affected vocal and the quirky, imaginative use of orchestral instruments over the dramatic piano is a pretty odd backing, but when you add those harmonies and the kitchen sink, the effect is quite startling. 'As Close As You Can Get' is more of the same but is even more grandiose again, all manner of things going on in different directions but all nailed together by the thumping bass of Ken Steimonts. The multiple keyboard parts and imaginative arrangements mean that there's a cacophony of sound, it should by rights sound like a dog loose in a cattery, but it's all put together with such precision that it's just glorious. How come they can't get drums to sound like this anymore?

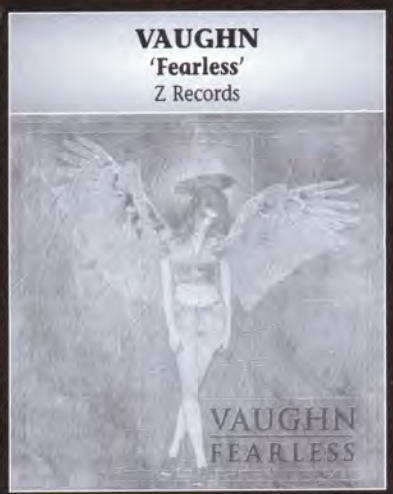
On 'Mystic Sharon', the band sound similar to the odder parts of the debut Trillion album, possibly because Gary Lyons produced that as well, but it's one of the most 'normal' sounding songs on the whole album. 'Feel The Heart' is next, another Trillion-esque outing with some of the pompiest keys and highest falsetto voices ever heard, that organ sound and those swirling synths just kill me!

My favourite is 'Average Boy', a song with many instrumental quirks, a great guitar solo and even some guitar/synth interplay. There's a bit where Brad Love's voice almost cracks on the phrase "not so careless", it's one of those magic moments that doesn't happen too often and could never be repeated. The ballad 'I Will Hear' is a beautiful piece with just piano and a fragile vocal, and has Brad harmonising with himself. If Queen's 'Love Of My Life' moves you, you'll need a compass to find your composure after listening to this one.

The massive drums of Richard Bryans herald the closing 'Maple Hall', which is a kind of pomp/new wave crossover, with the band doing a passable impression of Supertramp jamming with XTC.

The remastering is absolutely incredible, how come Rewind manage to do it better than anyone else? The sleeve notes, by Aviary's biggest fan and Warrington's most

Fear No Evil!



THIS IS the second album to emerge from the former voice of Tyketto, Danny Vaughn, under his new band name of Vaughn. *Some months back I asked Danny how he would describe the new album he was working on and his reply was 'A big rock record, just for the fun of it'. 'Fearless' certainly has it's rock moments but it also has more than it's fair share of quieter moments along the way, courtesy of some stunning songwriting by the aforementioned Mr. Vaughn and top class musicianship by his band of trusty warriors, fellow ex-Tykes rhythm section of drummer Michael Clayton and bassist Jamie Scott plus guitarist PJ Zitarossa and keyboardist Kyle Cummings. The lead off and title track 'Fearless' is exactly what you would expect from Danny - a big powerful rocker, carefully punctuated with gentle piano for effect with a huge singable chorus and a very modern edge which will no doubt soon establish itself as a live favourite. 'Haunted' carries on from where 'Is That All There Is' left off...insanely melodic, acoustically driven power pop par excellence, the likes of which thousands of other bands will aspire to write without ever coming close.*

All through his career Danny Vaughn has been first and foremost a storyteller with an uncanny knack of not only being able to tell a tale, but putting it across musically in such a way that it appeals to everybody and 'Million Miles of Road' easily falls into that category. 'I've had some success, I've had a little bit of fame, more often than I've had a dollar to my name' are perhaps some of the most honest words ever spoken by any musician? However the verse containing the words 'I've still got my drummer, I've still got my health, Still got plenty of miles in the tank left' will be the catylyst for huge smiles from the faithful knowing Vaughn have much more left to say. 'Was There a Moment' is another step in a more modern direction for the band, clearly happy to be leaving the albatross called 'Don't Come Easy' behind as they head into pastures new, the closing section of the song being similar to TNT's 'Crashing Down' from 'Transistor'. 'When You Walk Away' is another flick through Danny's storybook, with lyrics to melt even the hardest heart.

'Dulcimer Street' is a strange one...totally acoustic with some very cool backing vocals, it's a ballad about the good 'ol South telling us all about the return of the Southern army and what a good man Robert E.Lee was...hmmm. 'Just Like That' drags the tempo up again, another real life story and almost bordering on Americana with yet another thoroughly singable chorus. 'Carry Me Home' brings the album to a close, a gentle blues swagger inducing the slightest of foot shuffles on a dance floor before Danny and the choir take us home in a gospel style finale which will have the entire congregation of Danny's rock and roll church rockin' in the aisles and at the same time be the envy of many a preacher desperately trying to swell the coffers through daily TV.

So there you have it folks, album number two from Vaughn and 'Don't come Easy' it certainly is not. However it does bear more than a passing resemblance to 'Strength in Numbers' with that bluesy feel managing to wrap itself around Danny's stories in a way which only these guys are able to do. My only gripe with the album is it consists of only nine tracks and clocks in at a meagre thirty eight minutes. Surely another track or two wouldn't have hurt that much. For fans of Tyketto you'll find a lot here to please, Vaughn fans likewise. However with the new modern edge being displayed by the band I'm sure it's only a matter of time before the secret gets out and a whole new audience opens up. But then again, wouldn't it be long overdue? Highly Recommended

• Kieran Dargan

pompous Irishman, Stephen B. Allen (you know I'm only jealous, mate!), tell the story of the band in a way that only a true zealot could. By the way, whatever happened to Gary Lyons?

• PHIL ASHCROFT

MONKEY HEAD
'Monkey Head'
Now & Then/Frontiers

Amongst all the bigger names that the label have been signing in recent months, Monkeyhead sneaked in there almost unnoticed with their first mention being at the end of the Union 4 compilation. Although not containing any well known members, the one thing that piqued my interest was a phrase I haven't seen on a hard rock release for quite some time: 'Produced by Beau Hill'. The US band are a four piece formed by the songwriting duo of singer Simon Davies and guitarist Jason Hook, and this is unashamedly hook-laden 80's commercial hard rock with a full-on flashy guitar hero in the style of Van Halen, Bettencourt and the Pete Lesperance of old. Completed by bassist Paul Bartel and drummer Steve O, the band are pretty varied and the more rocking tracks are solid riffy fare in the best traditions of bands like Dokken, Warrant and Firehouse.

Kicking off with the Dokken meets Def Leppard vibe of 'The One That Makes You Crazy', the first thing that hits you is the awesome production. That compressed guitar sound hasn't been heard since the last Pangea album, and maybe the band sound like a US version of them. The collection of incendiary riffs on this album is the best I've heard since back in the day, with Mike Slamer being another possible comparison. The vocals are typically trashy but tuneful in the vein of a Jani Lane, Marq Torien or old Kip Winger. Actually, Simon Davies is actually more varied and harder to pin down than that, but you get the idea.

'Dragon Fly' and 'Guns Of July' have more than a little of the Harem Scarem's about them in the riffs, with Hook putting in lots of Mood Swings style panache amongst the slightly funky mid-paced commercial rock. Again the production makes the kick-drum hit you in the face with every beat. On the ballad 'Temptation' Davies proves how good a singer he is, and the simple arrangement reminds me of the forgotten heroes of the L.A. metal scene, Crywolf. Excellent songwriting and a gorgeous melody make this one of the highlights. 'Anything For Money' is a slightly bluesy riff-rocker with Hook coming on like Dann Huff meets Hendrix, with the band combining several different styles into one seamless whole. The song from the Union sampler, 'Adriana', is pretty catchy but is still probably one of my least favourite songs on the album, lacking in a killer verse to go with the great chorus and superb guitar solo. 'Bow To Your Master' is reminiscent of 'Pull'-era Winger, with some killer melodic bits rising from a mostly dark and angry song and an interesting arrangement, and another great guitar solo. The angry vibe continues for 'Stark Raving Mad' which has a George Lynch riff and a pounding bassline, Davies' soaring vocals just carrying enough rasp to sound like he means the lyrics. You have to really concentrate on Hook's guitar to hear the full extent of what he's doing under Simon's vocals, but suffice to say that he pulls off the best display of guitar pyrotechnics that I've heard for quite a while. Also, is this going to be the first album in the current rock scene to require parental guidance stickers?

After another great ballad in 'Only You', the trashy 'Morphine' is a huge juggernaut of choppy guitar groove with more angry lyrics, with some very Bon Jovi-esque Whoa-oh's. "Thrill me, kill me", indeed! The closing 'All My Friends In Heaven' is a pretty basic acoustic based power ballad but maybe the hook doesn't quite live up to the build-up. The drums are absolutely massive, so even on the ballads there's no chance of the band ever wimping out. The band have written some amazing songs, and coupled with one of the best Beau Hill productions ever (how much did THAT cost?). This is one of the best '80's style commercial hard rock albums I've heard for some time. It takes a few spins to take in exactly what's going on, but as a first attempt the guys can be very proud.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

PARADISE
'Light The Fire'
Escape Music

After the initial breakup of Loverboy after the Wildlife album, keyboard player Doug Johnson was looking for an outlet for some of the songs he had written. At about the same time, George Criston, the excellent voice of Kick Axe was also at a loose end, so it was only natural that they should join up and do something together. Demos were soon recorded, and very good they were too, but unfortunately the offer from a major record company never came, so after many years of inactivity (and with Johnson now back with the re-formed Loverboy) they've been snapped up by Escape and here are the results. It could have been just another of those projects that never made it and sounds completely out of date but the complete re-recording of the original demos has given the material a wonderful sound and a great new lease of life. The strange thing is that although Johnson wrote all the material, it's Criston who has the strongest influence on the sound of this album, and it comes across like Kick Axe with keyboards.

Another main ingredient is talented guitarist Joe Wowk, whose flashy melodic solos and cool riffs are reminiscent of Autograph's Steve Lynch or Coney Hatch's Steve Shelski.

Doug Johnson has a knack of penning basic party tunes but Criston's unique vocal arrangements and Johnson's unusual keyboard sounds turn them into catchy, commercial anthems that you just can't get out of your head. Some of the songs are basic bubblegum fare and the likes of Rockiday, Birds Of A Feather and 2XTC are so chant-along and dumb that a prog-head like me should have been appalled, but they're also so incessantly catchy that you can't help being sucked in. It's a fine line between stupid and clever!

It's not all so trivial though, there are some real quality songs here, and the likes of 'You Have The Touch' and 'Ride The Storm Alone' show a more serious side with some atmospheric synths and impassioned vocals.

Joe Wowk's playing is quite superb throughout and when he really lets rip, like on 'Going Down To Sin City' and 'Light The Fire,' he really is quite stunning, bringing to mind the best work of Steve Lynch or Vito Bratta.

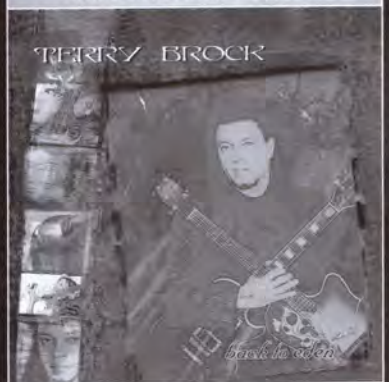
Album closer 'Light The Fire' itself for some strange reason reminds me of Lee Aaron during her 'Call Of The Wild' period, and 'Paradise' the song has an early Bon Jovi riff straight from 'Slippery When Wet'. As with everything else on this album, I'm sure Criston (have you worked out yet that he's one of my favourite singers?) could sing the phone book and still make everything sound like Kick Axe, such is the originality of his delivery and phrasing.

High point of the album is 'Love Is', which is one of those songs that has everything in the right place, with a gorgeous melody line, a chorus to die for, and some fiery pyrotechnics from Wowk. Quite simply, it's one of the great uplifting tunes of our time and is worth the price of this CD on it's own.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

Paradise Found!

TERRY BROCK
'Back To Eden'
Now & The/Frontiers Records



TO MY mind Terry Brock is one of melodic rock's great unsung heroes, possessing a voice to rival the best the genre has to offer. Terry is best known for his work with Strangeways, with whom he recorded two classic albums in the late 80's, but take a browse through your CD collection and you'll find his name recurring as a backing vocalist on albums by Valentine, Kansas, and Michael Bolton (to name just a few). After a hiatus in New York, during which he worked as a studio musician, Terry returned to melodic rock last year as part of the supergroup 'The Sign' who produced one of the year's most impressive releases. On this, his first solo album, he shrugs off the pomp and progressive influences of that group and returns to the sound for which he is most loved: glossy, hook filled AOR.

What immediately strikes you is the quality of the songwriting: Terry delivers a barrage of consistently glorious melodic rock numbers one after the other. Highlights include 'Up All Night' (previewed on the Union 4 sampler) - a driving rock anthem co-written by Mark Mangold that comes across as a mixture of Survivor, Drive She Said, and The Sign, 'Native Sons' - a homage to the Strangeways album of the same name, and 'Forever Now' - a song written by Bob Held, Joe Lynn Turner, and Peter Bliss with a chorus reminiscent of The Storm's 'Love Isn't Easy'. However, the standout number has to be the album's title track - a Jim Peterik co-write entitled 'Back To Eden'. This is pure 80's Survivor - tough and moody - complete with a pounding 'Burning Heart' style rhythm section, and an anthemic chorus that isn't a million miles away from 38 Special's 'Rebel To Rebel'. The album favours mid-tempo numbers such as the opener - 'I Wanna Love Someone' (which pays a nod to Two Fires' 'Never Stop Loving You'), the Steve Perry-styled 'Another Chance', and a souped-up version of 'Your Man Again' (totally transformed from the demo on Union 3). However, there are several memorable ballads on offer as well, including the Stan Bush/Mitch Malloy flavoured 'I Should've Known' and the mellow 'Waiting'. Spicing up the mix are the bluesy 'Light of the Moon' and the Celtic-inspired 'Coming Home'.

The true star of the show though is Terry's voice. Ever expressive, powerful, and perfectly pitched, he makes the transition between soulful ballads and searing rockers effortlessly. Terry puts his own mark on the songs while also incorporating aspects of Steve Perry, Kevin Chalfant, and Jimi Jamison into his delivery. The production is crystal clear, with a nice balance of keyboards, guitars, and acoustic guitars (which add hints of Nelson and the aforementioned Mitch Malloy to the overall sound). Special mention goes to Teddy Cook's bass - an imposing presence throughout which provides the album with a strong rhythmic backbone.

This album will appeal to any fans of the AOR genre, particularly fans of Strangeways, Survivor, and The Storm, and will surely earn a place within the top five albums of the year. 'Back To Eden' is a shining example that melodic rock is alive and well, and will mark Terry Brock as one of the all-time greats.

• ***DANIEL HAYES***

STARCASTLE
'Chronos 1'

Starcastle were, and in fact are now again, a 70's progressive band often compared to Yes. The signature Chris Squire bass sound, the Jon Anderson style voice and lyrics, the big keyboards, and the jangly Howe guitar sound (multiplied by two) - it's all there. The Champaign, Illinois band released four albums on Epic between 1976 and 1978, by which time they'd given in to record company pressure and diluted their sound to a more commercial, although in retrospect, unsuccessful sound.

The original line-up, of which original REO Speedwagon vocalist Terry Luttrell was the most notable, re-united a couple of years back, and as a prelude to new material have released this archive of pre-album demo's recorded between 1973 and 1976 on their newly-formed Sunsinger label. What's interesting about this is that some of it is even more Yes-like than the album versions, the sound is sparser and a lot of it has even less prominent guitar than the versions we're used to. The many time changes and amazing musicianship are all intact, as are the vocal harmonies that became the band's trademark, with all except keyboard player Herb Schildt joining Luttrell in some pretty neat counter-harmonies.

From the s/t album, the epic 'Lady Of The Lake' is almost identical in feel and arrangement, a long and winding piece of American progressive history, and one of their most popular tunes from their most successful album. As with all Starcastle songs, it's driven along by the expressive bass of Gary Strater and the technical drumming of Steve Tassler, which is so reminiscent of Bill Bruford at his best. Herb Schildt weaves his synths and organ around the intricate vocal harmonies, while guitarists Steve Hagler and Matt Stewart fill in the gaps without ever playing the same thing. The star of the show is Schildt, he's like Wakeman, Emerson and Larry Fast rolled into one and the arrangements make sure he's never short of something to do.

'Forces' from the same album is also a similar arrangement to the album version, while 'To The Firewind' is considerably different with an extra two minutes to fit in the non-album intro and some harmony bits that contain some untypical deeper voices.

All but one of the tunes from their 2nd album 'Fountains Of Light' are here, and the interesting thing is that I'd always assumed that Roy Thomas Baker had been responsible for a lot of the sound, but on this evidence the songs were performed exactly as they

were written. Baker may have given them a lot of extra bombast and dynamics, and some neat stereo effects, but the harmonies and arrangements were all the band's own. The 10 minute 'Fountains' for example may lack some of the oomph of the Baker version, but the almost live sound of the demo has a charm of it's own. By the time you're halfway through 'True To The Light' you begin to realise that a lot of the vocals actually sound better than the somewhat erratic album versions.

All the intricacies and nuances are intact, and Schildt's leaning away from the organ towards the synthesisers is beginning to establish itself, and the guy really let's rip on some pretty spacey stuff.

Two songs that, at first glance, seem to be unfamiliar to me, turn out to be old friends. 'Morning Fall' is actually 'Dawning Of The Day' with some extra bits, and 'A Fall Of Diamonds' is a completely familiar version of 'Diamond Song : Deep Is The Light'.

'Where Caverns Wind' is a pretty simple (for them!) and beautiful song based on acoustic guitars, that never made it onto the 'Fountains Of Light' album, probably because they already had a killer acoustic song, 'Portraits' which is here also in a near-identical version. Perhaps of most interest to Starcastle fans are the two last pieces on the disc. 'Dance Of The Physotrons' is one of their earliest pieces, recorded in '73 when Luttrell and Stewart had only just joined, it's quite primitive by their standards and it's odd lyrics and space-rock themes hint more at ELP than anything else.

'Breath And Thunder' is another oldie (the oldest in fact!) that is more in the traditional 70's rock mould. Some distinctly normal sounding guitars and Wakeman-esque keyboards make it sound like early Eloy, although this version sadly lacks Herb's War Of The Worlds synthesiser solo.

All in all, an interesting trip through the archives of one of the most creative US progressive bands of the 70's, and a must have for all fans of the band awaiting the new album.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

RADIO SILENCE
'Sirens'
Escape Music

The first Radio Silence album of a few years ago didn't do much for me to be honest, and I wasn't really looking forward to this one, but it's my pleasant task to inform you that this is a big improvement in every way possible. Vocalist/Keyboard player Alistair Gordon has delivered a mature album of well written and played pop-rock in the vein of a rockier Mike And The Mechanics or the lighter side of Foreigner or Tall Stories. The huge leap forward in the quality of a lot of current Escape label releases is due in no small part to the choice of experienced personnel involved in the making of the albums, in this case the co-production and guitar playing of Heartland/Export man Steve Morris. Also, the label is using it's Canadian connections to good effect with a great mix by Ray Roper, and a great Canadian rhythm section of Dave Hopia and Frank Baker recorded under the supervision of Kenny Kaos.

Of course, all this would be useless if you didn't have the songs to back it up, and thankfully this time Mr. Gordon has come up with AOR gems like the excellent 'Sirens Song', with it's gorgeous melody and dancing bass-line. Alistair and his songwriting partners (including ex-Corey Hart guitarist Mike Hehir and Mike And The Mechanics/Sad Café singer Paul Young, who recently passed away) have again come up with some summery AOR tunes, but with a little more variety than before. 'The House In My Head' for instance, is a bluesy ballad with some superb vocals and some tastefully restrained playing from Morris, while 'Back Door To Heaven' has an almost Bad Company/Foreigner classic rock vibe.

Alistair's voice really shines on the likes of the riffy 'Shame' and the poppy 'Abigail', but it's the quality of the songwriting that's the biggest hook and, in a perfect world, would have major crossover chart potential. Kenny Kaos makes an appearance himself on the atmospheric 'Answer My Prayer', with a killer solo, but elsewhere it's Morris who's perfect accompanyment to the songs gives the material an almost Giant-esque perfection.

The highlight of the album is the upbeat 'Lolita' which rocks along nicely with a big catchy vocal arrangement that sounds like it should have been on the Tubes 'Completion Backward Principle' album. All albums of this type have what you would call 'fillers', and this is no exception, but one or two also-rans on an album of 12 songs leaves a pretty high percentage of great tunes. There's nothing here that's particularly poor, it's just that the standard of songs like 'Pressing Flesh' and 'Lolita' would be pretty impossible to maintain. If you like thoughtful poppy AOR in the style of Mike And The Mechanics or Walk On Fire then I'm sure you'll love this.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

TYGERS OF PAN TANG
'Mystical'
Z Records

The spirit of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal lives on! The Tygers are the latest band to reform, and with guitarist Rob Weir being the only remaining member from any of the well known line-ups, with this album you get exactly what you expect. Take away the vocals of Jon Deverill and the guitars of John Sykes, Fred Purser, Neil Shepherd or Steve Thompson and what have you got left? A raw, riff-laden collection of songs straight from the 'Wild Catz' era, that's what!

One thing that is strange is the performance of vocalist Tony Liddell, because although in the past Tony has proved that he's a pretty good melodic singer, here he's gone for something a bit more shouty and in keeping with the Heavy Metal nature of this record. I'm not really sure that it works, and I'm certain that most Tygers fans would have wanted something more reminiscent of 'Spellbound' or 'The Cage', or is that just me?

After the long synth intro the crunching riff to 'Detonator' kicks in and it's obvious that 20 years has done nothing to change Weir's view of how rock should be, the guitar sound is instantly recognisable as is the simple but effective solo. Liddell's vocals are pure NWOBHM fare, but he sounds like he's in a different room from the rest of the band, this is a feature of the whole album and tends to grate on your nerves after a while. There are shades of John Sykes and even Mike Tramp in the vocals as well, but not very often. 'Firepower' is faster and even more raw than the opener, with the voice straining to be heard over the layers of buzz-saw guitars, while 'Keep This Rock Alive' is a chant-along mid-paced anthem on which the title tells you all you need to know about the lyrics.

Whilst I absolutely hated the version of 'Secret Agent' on the Rock The Nations sampler, I have to admit that the new version is much better. It has the same tongue-in-cheek lyrics but the arrangement and the vocals are much better and more powerful, great riff too. The only real departure from the early 80's Tygers sound is the title track, which has a Zeppelin stop/start guitar and keyboard riff, and a slight hint of Thin Lizzy's 'Jailbreak' in the middle. The lyrics are a little different too and I wish they'd explored this direction further.

Liddell sounds uncannily like Alex Harvey at times on 'Roar', a mid-paced workout that lacks a bit of the power of some of the other songs, including the ensuing 'Streetfighter' which has a huge and entirely familiar Tygers riff which recaptures the aggression of old. 'Jump In Your Shoes' is the highlight for me and has several different riffs with hints of Van Halen and AC/DC, the vocals are a little clearer and it also has a nice melodic solo from Weir. 'Ride 4 Free' is another song that contains a few different riffs to keep things moving, and 'Greed' is a slight variation on Montrose's 'Space Station #5', while album closer 'Sun Lotion Suicide' has a prominent bass and some pretty bizarre lyrics. It actually sounds like Liddell's singing 'Slow Motion Suicide', which would actually have made for a much better title, but it has interesting guitar arrangements and works pretty well.

One word of warning though. On first hearing this album sounded pretty impressive but repeated plays suggested that its appeal is pretty one-dimensional and just an early 80's riff-fest. If 'Wild Catz II' is what you wanted then fair enough, but a little more variation would have been nice.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

All About Love!

SINCE STAN'S live performance at the Gods in 1999 things have been a little on the quiet side. *Since then there have been all sorts of rumours regarding this CD and it's song content. At one point It was rumoured that Stan was going to be working with Millenium guitarist Ralph Santolla and that this was going to be a hard hitting melodic rock album that would rival his Barrage album. While it may not be in the same style as that album, there's still no mistaking the fact that this is a Stan Bush CD.*

All the usual trademarks are there, it's just that this time Stan has given them a much more modern feel and if that makes you go running off in search of something all fluffy and pink, then that would be your loss as this is one of Stan's finest moments and then some.

It has a lot in common with his "Higher Than Angels" CD that he released a few years back only this album has a little bit more steel running down it's spine courtesy of the guitars of Don Kirkpatrick. Unlike the "Heaven" CD, which was a collection of demo's from the early nineties, this album is as fresh as a daisy and shows exactly where Stan is coming from in the year 2001. In fact, the more I listen to this album, the more it has in common with "HTA" which was the last proper album that Stan made. It contains a certain matureness that was only found on that album and this time Stan has taken a good look around and added a few new twists and turns and has embraced a few new influences along the way.

Just listen to the likes of "Some Things Never Change" which is pure Tom Petty (in fact, the only thing missing is Stevie Nicks) or the modern day Bon Jovi inspired "Like I've Never Lived Before". There is still plenty of stuff on this album that will keep the "Bring Back Barrage Brigade" happy but if I have to be truthfull, I would have to say I'd prefer one album of this calibre than ten of the likes of the "All Our Yesterdays" that was "Heaven" (a good album, just 10 years out of date). If Stan wants to be taken seriously as an artist then he has to go in the direction that he is headed for and never look back, otherwise he will just get stuck in a rut. An album for lovers of quality music everywhere and one of his best albums for awhile.

• ROB EVANS

GRAND ILLUSION
'In The Beginning'
Escape Music

After a name change to Grand Illusion and the release of a fabulous melodic hard rock album in 'The Book Of How To Make It', the Swedes have been picking up some excellent reviews. With the two albums on this value-for-money double CD package becoming increasingly hard to get, it was only logical that Khalil Turk and Barry Kirtley would dig a little deeper into their pockets and finance the release of the two records they made as Promotion.

'Not For Sale'(1997) and 'Yeah, Yeah' (1998) were two finely crafted West-Coast AOR releases that deserved to reach more people than they did, and there should be plenty here to delight any fans of the lighter side of Toto, or bands like Venice. There are two newly recorded bonus tracks on each disc too.

Taking the second disc first (because the second disc is actually the first album) it was obvious even back then that the brainchild of the operation was Anders Rydholm, who not only wrote almost everything but also played guitar, bass and keys. Vocalist Peter Sundell and drumming brother Christian made up the rest of the band at this point, and the debut album was a smooth AOR outing that was maybe a little too lightweight at times. Nevertheless, the likes of the upbeat 'One In A Million' and the inventive arrangements on 'Wanted Dead Or Alive' make for perfect melodic tunes that stick in your head. The bouncy 'Higher Love', the soaring 'Rollercoaster Ride', and the slightly eccentric 'Pack Of Lies' give hints of the direction they would later take, and make good use of their guest guitarists Stefan Leoson and Jon Stavert. It's also interesting to note that their other singer Per Svensson was just a backing vocalist on this album, and current guitarist Ola Karlsson also appears briefly, but their contributions to these two albums can't be underestimated and the harmonies are superb. On the whole this album was a little too light for my tastes, the two bonus tracks are no exception and give the impression of a ballad heavy album. Oddly enough the third song, 'After All', although it's listed in the credits, isn't actually there. I've no idea why, but it seems like there must have been a mistake somewhere along the way.

Disc one (album two) starts with the bonus tracks, of which the curiously titled 'Poor Cow' is the most aggressive song in the package, and the closest to their recent album, both musically and lyrically. The other bonus track, 'Big Stuff Solution' is another great song and the most funky and Toto-like song on offer. While the rest of the disc is more lightweight, the songs are much better than on the debut and many have very inventive horn arrangements and good melodies. The likes of 'Trampoline', and 'The Hunter And The Fox' have a great funk vibe and some interesting sounds going on to keep you on your toes, and the production is noticeably better. By this time Ola Karlsson had begun to write most of the lyrics, and his odd style coupled with Rydholm's classy melodies

make for an interesting mixture of directions and sounds. The highlights would have to be the excellent and uptempo 'Premonition', and the almost House Of Shakira-like 'A Change In The Weather', although 'Man Made Thing' is almost up there with the best of The Tubes too. What the hell! It's all good and even the stirring ballad 'Glad To See You Go' impresses me, as does Sundell's voice throughout, and me with my aversion to singers with strong accents too!

There are many good songs on this package, but a word of warning if you're buying it because you liked 'The Book...', this is a completely different set of tunes in the smooth West-Coast AOR mould rather than any attempt at guitar-based rock. But if harmonies and brass arrangements are your thing, it's a bargain!

• PHIL ASHCROFT

LE MANS
'Le Mans'
Rewind/Sony

After a largely unspectacular debut album that most notably featured The Storm/Two Fires guitarist Josh Ramos, Le Mans came back with a new direction, and a huge leap forward in the songwriting. Originally released a full 3 years after the debut in 1986, singer and writer Peter Marrino (who later recorded with Cacophony and 9.0) and guitarist Derek Frigo (an early member of Enuff Z'Nuff) had dropped most of the anonymous metal posturing, and adopted a smoother AOR sound. Their career ran almost parallel to Icon's and they were managed and produced by Mike Varney, who had discovered Frigo as a teenager and set him up on Varney's own Shrapnel label. For this album the band managed to land a deal with Columbia, but the album was poorly promoted and the band were wrongly perceived as a heavy metal band. They were also just over a year early to be part of the post-Bon Jovi melodic hard rock movement, which I'm sure would have made all the difference.

Now while this is regarded as somewhat of an underground classic, but I'm afraid that when compared to the likes of Icon, King Kobra and Autograph, it just doesn't stand up. Sure, when it's good it's very good, but doesn't quite make the 'classic' status in my eyes. The more melodic rockers like 'Love Lies', 'Chain Around My Heart' and 'Love Is A Waste Of Time' are absolutely excellent slabs of AOR-tinged hard rock, with some great vocals and some fabulous solos from Mr. Frigo. Great songs one and all, with some nice keyboard touches from Johnny Johnson, who also plays second guitar, good solid drums from Kenny Stavropoulos, and some nimble bass from Brett Bloomfield (Starship, Big Bad Wolf). These particular songs are as good as anything else you will hear in this genre, the closest comparison I can think of besides Icon's 2nd album is the lighter stuff on Heaven's Edge's debut ('Find Another Way', 'Come Play The Game' etc.).

There are a couple of ballads, 'Never Wanna See You Cry' is a great song with Marrino singing like he never has before, or since, but 'Misunderstanding' is just too dull and doesn't really go anywhere.

To balance the album out a bit they occasionally fall back into their metal days with Marrino screaming for all he's worth, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. 'Addicted' for instance is an absolute gem, it has power , melody, tons of guitar, and the kind of bellowing vocals that would make Ron Keel retire. 'Bad Reputation' is another fine example of how to balance melody with power, but 'Life Of Rock'n'Roll' is just too ordinary, and 'Sex, Guitars and Rock'n'Roll', despite being three of my favourite things, is cliched and just plain dumb. The sleeve notes are by Ian McIntosh from AOR Basement and are pretty sketchy compared to Kick Axe, Aviary etc, but maybe there's nothing else to tell as there's no mention of touring, how the deal with Columbia came about and the usual in-depth stuff. That's a minor quibble because a lot of work has gone into the excellent re-mastering, which is up to Rewind's usual high standard. I would recommend it to any fans of 80's commercial hard rock, but I can't help wondering how they would have fared if they'd stuck it out a while longer.

• PHIL ASHCROFT

SURGIN
'When Midnight Comes'
Zoom Club

Here's one I've been waiting for forever it seems. One of those albums that has become more interesting as time goes by because of some of the people involved, who later went on to other things. Jack Ponti's finest hour should have been available on CD ages ago, but as they say, better late than never.

Originally released on Music For Nations in 1985 this is an interesting look at, not only a good band who should have made a bigger impact, but also a fine songwriter who, if he'd had a bigger appetite for success, could have made it big. His former band-mate Jon Bon Jovi had just hit the big time with the formula that guitarist Jack had a big part in creating, and the Surgin album was recorded at a time when Ponti almost gave up the music business for good.

Style-wise there isn't a lot of difference between this and early Bon Jovi, in fact the Ponti co-written 'Shot Through The Heart' is included here and fits seamlessly into the Surgin sound.

Containing ten songs, it's about evenly divided between the mid paced punchy commercial rock of the likes of 'When Midnight Comes' and 'Hot Nights', and power ballads like 'Heartbeat Away' and 'Wait Until Morning', with no real drop in quality throughout. It's justice that this CD is finally out and I would have bought it just for 'Desiree', a 'Runaway' style rocker that should have been at the beginning of the album instead of tucked away at the end. The use of two keyboard players, even though Ponti states in the sleeve notes that one of them couldn't play, seems pretty unnecessary at first, but the more you listen the more you notice how important they both were to the sound. The way they weave in and out of each other at times gives the songs a whole new dimension.

It was also notable that it was Prophet/solo singer Russell Arcara's first recorded appearance, and although his voice was an acquired taste and his higher register could be grate on the nerve endings back then, there's no denying the effort and enthusiasm that he put into the songs.

The digital remastering is excellent and it's like hearing the album properly for the first time, more powerful than I remembered it, and the keys especially really jump out of the mix.

Ponti's sleeve notes are pretty interesting too and it's to the man's credit that there's not an ounce of jealousy in his words when talking about the subsequent success of Jon Bon Jovi.

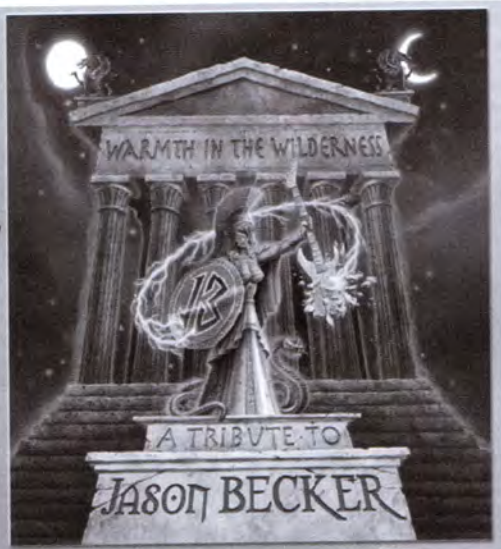
There's apparently a lot of unreleased material where this came from that Zoom Club intend to put out soon. Can't wait!

• PHIL ASHCROFT

Lion Music
Progressive metal hard rock label

CD 1

1. Stormwind - A little Ain't Enough
2. Torben Enevoldsen - Altitudes
3. Ron Keel's Iron Horse featuring Robert Marcello - Eleven Blue Egyptians
4. Cosmosquad feat. Jeff Kollman, Vinnie Moore, Chris Poland, Jeff Watson, Steve Morse - Jam for Jason
5. David Martone - Higher
6. PUA feat. Carina Alfie & Linda McDonald of Phantom Blue - Becker Ola
7. Rolf Munkes' Empire - Dogtown Shuffle
8. Evolution - Go Off
9. Mark Boals & Lars Eric Mattsson - Hammerhead Shark
10. Hit The Ground Runnin' - Jasin Street
11. Tony Baena - If You Have to Shoot...
12. Josephine of Phantom Blue - Baby's on Fire
13. Jeff Scheetz - Sensible Shoes
14. Cyril Achard - ESP
15. Phi Ansan Yaan-Zek & Lale Larson - Air



CD 2

1. Project Alcazar - Opus Pocus
2. Eric Sands with mark Ragsdale - Mandy's Littlle Throbbing Heart
3. Paul Nelson - Blue
4. May Lian - It's Showtime
5. Jeff Pilson - Becker's Bolero
6. Mattias IA Eklund - Lydia's House
7. All the Usual Suspects - Drop in the Bucket
8. Rob Johnson - Forcefield
9. Mistheria with Rick Renstrom - Urmila
10. Marty Friedman - Black Stallion Jam
11. Paul Gilbert - Hawking
12. Anders Johansson - Primal
13. Eric Zimmermann - Rain
14. Mike Campese - Concerto
15. Lars Eric Mattsson, Alex Masi, Pamme, Robin McAuley- Tell the Truth
16. Torben Enevoldsen, James Byrd, Patrick Rondat, Ron Thal, Mike Chlasciak, Sami Asp, Lars Eric Mattsson - Outro Jam

Warmth in the Wilderness - A Tribute to Jason Becker

Jason Becker is a major talent struck by the disease ALS. We are very proud to present this tribute and benefit album featuring some of the greatest talents of today

Buy online at:
www.loudmetal.com www.lionmusic.com www.nightmare-records.com

CARGO RECORDS

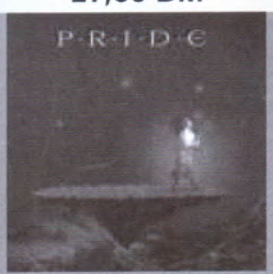
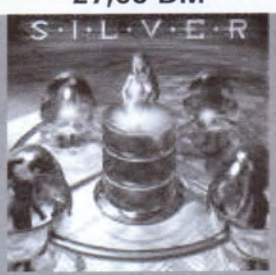
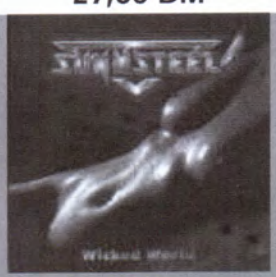
LION MUSIC, STROMSANGARNA, 22 410 GODBY, ÅLAND, FINLAND
BUY ONLINE AT OUR WEB STORE OR SEND 25 U S DOLLARS/CD CASH IN BILLS - NO CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS ACCEPTED - INCLUDES SHIPPING WORLDWIDE

WWW.LIONMUSIC.COM

THE HOME OF MELODIC ROCK
AOR HEAVEN
WWW.AORHEAVEN.COM
LANDSHUTERSTR. 11 84051 ALTHEIM
GERMANY Tel. ++49-(0)-8703-8517

Tel : ++49-8703 – 8517 // Fax : ++49-8703 - 8568 // E-mail : Georg.Siegl@aorheaven.com
website : http://www.aorheaven.com

POINT MUSIC – AOR HEAVEN LABEL NEWS

PRIDE	SILVER	EVA	SUN'N'STEEL	SAHARA
Far From The Edge	S / T	The One	Wicked World	S / T
27,00 DM	27,00 DM	27,00 DM	27,00 DM	27,00 DM
				
Sensational debut from the British newcomers along the lines of early DARE and STRANGEWAYS – don't miss it !	Mega project led by Michael Voss (Casanova) feat. Gary Barden, Don Airey, Bernie Torme and Andreas Broon – it's hot!	A pleasant surprise from Italy – EVA plays classic 80s AOR with stabbing keys and catchy hooklines – check them out !!!	Hard rockin' Swiss newcomers with a sound simular to early Gotthard, Crystal Ball and Shakra – Switzerland rocks !	Sweden's best kept secret – SAHARA plays ultra catchy AOR in the vein of early ALIEN, T'BELL and STREET TALK !!!

NEWS

AIRBORNE	S/T	30,00
ALLIGATOR STEW	A First Taste Of..	32,00
AOR	Next Stop : L.A.	33,00
BEYOND TWILIGHT	The Devil's Hall Of Fame	30,00
BLACK'N BLUE	Ultimate Collection	45,00
BRASS KITTEN	Across America (DD style!)	35,00
BRONZ	Taken By Storm	27,00
CATAWOMPUS	Well, It's About Time	32,00
DAVID GLEN EISLEY	The Lost Tapes	30,00
GREGG ROLIE	Roots	33,00
HUSH	II	30,00
IRON HORSE	S/T (feat. Ron Keel)	30,00
JK NORTHRUP	S/T	30,00
JOHN WAITE	Mask & Rover's Return 2 on1	33,00
JONATHAN CAIN	Anthology	32,00
LE MANS	II	30,00
LEONARDO	The Absolute Man	29,00
LITTLE RIVER BAND	Where We Started From	45,00
PAGES	S/T (1981) – JAP reissue	45,00
POISON	Video Hits-DVD- code free	45,00
PROPHET	Cycle Of The Moon +1	30,00
QUIET RIOT	Guilty Pleasures	45,00
RADIOACTIVE	Ceremony Of Innocence	29,00
RADIO SILENCE	Sirens	30,00
RUSS TAFF	S/T (1987)	30,00
SAMMY HAGAR	Cabo Wabo – double DVD	59,00
SILVER MOUNTAIN	Breakin' Chains +1 – JAP CD	50,00
SONATA ARTICA	Silence	30,00
STAN BUSH	Language Of The Heart	30,00
TED NUGENT	Full Bluntal Nugity	30,00
TERRY BROCK	Ack To Eden	30,00
THE PRESIDENT	By Appointment Of – JAP CD	45,00
TKO	Below The Belt +1	30,00
URBAN TALE	S/T	30,00
VAUGHN	Fearless	30,00
WAR & PEACE (J. PILSON)	Light At The End Of The Tun.	29,00
WESTWORLD	Live...In The Flesh	30,00

HIGHLIGHTS

TREAT The Pleasure Priciple +1 22,00 DM	TREAT Dreamhunter +1 22,00 DM	DEMON Spaced Out Monkey 30,00 DM
URGENT Cast The First Stone 27,00 DM	SHAKRA Power Ride 30,00 DM	HENRY LEE SUMMER Big Drum 35,00 DM

TERMS OF DELIVERY

CHECK IT OUT - ONLY 3-4 DAYS DELIVERY TO THE UK !!
All prices in German Marks (DM) - 3,2 DM = 1 £)
Shipping rate : 15,00 DM up to 15 CDs, free shipment for orders of 16 and more CDs
Delivery via DPD courier service - only 3 days delivery to the UK - we deliver at the next day !
We accept Master- and Visacard
Free catalog feat. reviews and interviews and DVD special every 4-5 weeks (in English, too) for our customers !!

Brad Gillis

NIGHT RANGER guitarist Brad Gillis issued his second solo album a few months back, the more song orientated 'Alligator'. I caught up with Brad to quiz him about the new record, the state of play within Night Ranger and his days with Ozzy Osbourne.

So what are you doing at the moment?

"I'm in the studio working away doing music for different video games."

Oh really, that seems to be big business at the moment for musicians.

"Yeah, we've got a line on the new Tiger Woods game for the Playstation. It's really fun to do. We just sit around and throw together some cool tunes that fit the game."

Of course that means that you have to play computer games for hours on end?

"No, not at all. We just watch it one time and go 'OK, let's do this'. It's pretty easy."

I'd like to talk about your new album 'Alligator'. Tell me a bit about it.

"Well, a few years back I started writing some new music and was approached by Pony Canyon Records in Japan to do another solo record so I started writing songs on my 15-track home studio getting ideas together. Then I moved to a larger studio and we transferred everything over to a big 24-track, 2 inch machine and had drummers come in and Gary Moon on vocals and just kept working on it till it was done about a year ago. Then last year it was released in Japan and I got my European release last week, so I'm pretty happy about the whole project."

I got mine on Saturday.

"Did you like it?"

It's fantastic. It's completely different to 'Gilrock Ranch' though. That to me seemed just like a guitar virtuoso showcase of your talents away from Night Ranger whereas this one is more like a 'band' album.

"Well, I wanted to do something like that. I had already done a 'guitar' album, so I wanted to be able to write SONGS, be able to sing and to grab special guests like Gary Moon to come in and fill out the record."

You asked me the other day what my favourite tracks were and straight off 'Alligator' was my favourite, but I'm beginning to think 'Eyes' because to me that sounds more like a Night Ranger song.

"The heavier side of Night Ranger with the crazy guitar stuff on it."

The words to 'Bigger than Life' really stuck in my head. Is that a very personal song?

"Yes, that's about my sister. I originally came up with the music on that and sang all types of different ideas in my head for a vocal on that. I had been dealing with my sister a lot lately through a few different family affairs and I just started singing the melody and lyric line in my head one day 'She's a fine, fine sister of mine'. I started singing that over the old original melody that I had on there and it seemed to work real well. But then I remembered a few times in my life with my sister that kinda stuck in my head and I related the lyrics over to Gary and him and I sat down and hammered out the idea for the lyrics to finish it off. So it is kinda personal, it deals with personal things between my sister and I over the years and she's a wonderful gal! My big sis!"

It has a bit of a Beatles feel to it.

"Yes, it's sorta that and harmonies on different spots and then a third part harmony on top of that and it just turned into what it was. It's a showcase of a lot of vocals and melody ideas and it's about my sister, so it was a fun song to write and it's one of my favourites on the record too."

What made you call the album Alligator?

"I was trying to think of a different theme to name the record and 'Alligator' was a song written by Gary and I many years ago that didn't make it on the Night Ranger 'Mojo' record. That song was kept around and I decided to bring it out and put it on the record and the more I thought about it and looked at the rest of the titles, 'Alligator' stuck in my head. So I just came up with the idea of having my guitar back in the water and the swampy muck as it were, to theme my album cover. Then Vonya Lambert put it all together and designed the CD artwork for me to finish it all."

Well it's certainly a bit different. It's a name that sticks in your mind more than some album titles that have been used lately. I think sometimes, bands are trying to be a little TOO clever with their titles.

"It's a pretty basic title, but it had never been used before! I was pretty amazed."

On 'Gilrock Ranch' you used co-wrote with and recorded with musicians such as Derek Sherinian and Greg Allman. Was that because that album was more experimental?

"I just create music. Where it starts and where it ends up is pretty much up in the air. When I did 'Gilrock Ranch' I just threw together some tunes and it ended up being mainly instrumental whereas this time I threw another batch of tunes together and it was mainly vocal songs. It's just a different area I wanted to get into. On both CDs I would just bring in musicians that I wanted, or were nearby at the time to help add to it."

I believe that the European release of Alligator has 2 bonus tracks on it compared to the one that came out in Japan.

"Yeah, I wanted to try something different with the European release so I took off a few of the weaker tracks and added a few of the newer tracks. 'Bigger than Life' is one of them and I definitely wanted that on the European release. The song 'Still' was written by Gary Moon years ago and we used that in the old Night Ranger version with Gary and the band and we decided to make it a little more modern sounding to take the CD in another direction that we hadn't taken it before."

I think a lot of the songs are more modern sounding. Not to take away from anything you've done before, but you certainly are managing to move with the times.

"Well, the production is a lot more modern. I recorded the drums the way I wanted to record them this time and that was in a big, huge live room with a lot of ambience especially the big rock songs, so I had fun doing that. I'm looking forward now to doing the NEW CD!"

Does the touring aspect of Night Ranger only happen during the summer? I heard that you tour then and concentrate on your studio stuff in the winter.

"Well, the last 2 years we've all decided to pick the best time of the year to go out on tour and do well, and that would be spring and summer, so we've been mainly booking that time for our shows doing the outdoor 4 or 5 band packages. Those have been great. We just started last weekend in California and we've got weekends booked up until May and then we're hoping to hop on a nice big fat tour throughout the whole summer."

What about touring with your own band?

"Well, I would have to find time to do that, but if there were any of my songs that were taking off in Europe or other areas I would like to follow it up with a tour."

Who are your musical influences?

"I was influenced very young by Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck. My brother is 7 years older than me and when I was growing up, at the age of 12 he was bringing home everything from Led Zeppelin 1 to Santana, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Hendrix, Jeff Beck. I'd sit in his room and put on headphones and just listen and play away. My brother was an electronics genius and he set me up with a little box to plug into that would wire up to my stereo. I used to play my little distortion box through my headphones, so I'd sit for hours on end in my room just playing the guitar. Playing and playing, I'd turn on the radio and play everything that came on there and pretty much developed everything by ear. I had my first band called The Invaders back then and we were about 11 or 12 years old and that's when I knew I wanted to play rock 'n roll. Then at my sixth grade talent show we won! I'll never forget the girls screaming in the audience when we got done. That's when I realised what I wanted to do with the rest of my life!"

You thought, 'Hmmmm, this is good,'?

"Yeah! Then I played in rock bands all through high school. Right after high school I started playing in club bands 6 nights a week until I was picked up by some guys who saw me playing in a nightclub. They asked me if I would like to join their band, Rubicon. They had just been signed by Twentieth Century Fox records and were going to LA to cut a record and I said 'Sure!'. We went down and did our first record and released that, and did another record and then did Cal Jam 2 on March 18th 1978. The biggest day of my life playing in front of 450,000 people and realising a dream come true. There were people like Ted Nugent, Santana, Mahogany Rush all appearing on the bill, so that was the biggest day of my life."

So Rubicon was about 1978?

"Yeah, 76-78. Jack Blades was in Rubicon and Kelly joined the band towards the end and then that's when it morphed into Night Ranger. Then Kelly and Jack and I met up with Fitz and that's when Night Ranger really started. That was in 1980. We took a couple of years to get a demo together and shop for a deal and then I was asked to go and play for Ozzy Osbourne in 1982 so I played with Ozzy for almost a year. Night Ranger ended up getting a record deal when I left Ozzy and went back and we released our first single 'Don't Tell Me You Love Me' and it was a big radio and MTV hit."

How did you get the gig with Ozzy, I mean you weren't exactly playing his kind of stuff, were you?

"Okay, I'll tell you the Ozzy story. Actually, this was back in '82 when Night Ranger was trying to get a record deal. We had spent a couple of years getting demos together and playing around the Bay Area honing our live show. It was kind of a problem, getting a record deal, because we were a little heavier than normal, with songs like "Don't Tell Me You Love Me" and 'Can't Find Me A Thrill'. I actually started another band called The Alameda All-Stars. We were playing locally around the San Francisco Bay area and we were doing Ozzy, Blue Oyster Cult and Bad Company tunes around the night club circuit, trying to keep myself busy, keep my

chops up. Meanwhile, Night Ranger kept trying to get a record deal. We were actually doing 2 Ozzy songs at that time. I'd heard on the radio that a plane crashed and Randy Rhodes was killed. That totally blew me away. I couldn't believe it. I just saw them play at the Day In The Green, an outdoor festival here in Oakland, California about a month or two before that! In the back of my mind, I thought 'Gee... I wonder who they're going to replace him with?' Anyway, I'm doing this Alameda All-Stars gig, doing my Ozzy tunes and this guy came in, a friend of mine, checkin' me out. His name is Preston Thrall. Preston Thrall's brother is Pat Thrall. Pat Thrall played with Tommy Aldridge in the Pat Travers Band. Tommy Aldridge was playing with Ozzy Osbourne at the time. Anyway, there's the connection. After the Alameda All-Stars show that night, Preston comes up and said 'Man, I should let my brother know you would fit right in and to get a hold of Tommy Aldridge about landing you the gig with Ozzy'. I thought 'Sure, THAT'S going to happen'. I said 'Well, go ahead and we'll see what happens.' That was a Friday night. Sunday morning, I get a phone call, early in the morning, waking me up and there is this English lady saying, 'Bradley?' I'm like, 'Yeah...? She says, 'This is Sharon Arden, Ozzy Osbourne's manager and we'd like to know if you'd want to fly to New York to audition for the band?' I'm going 'WHO IS THIS?' [laughs] She says, 'No, it's Sharon. Would you like to talk to Ozzy?' I said 'Yeah! Put Ozzy on the phone!' This English man's voice says 'Hello, Bradley?' and you know when you talk long distance, or at least back in '82, there was a delay in the phone line? I could tell it was long distance and after speaking with him after a minute or so he says, 'Get a piece of paper and a pencil and I want you to write down the songs that I want you to learn.'All of a sudden, I started believing that it was Ozzy and I started trembling. I thought, 'Oh My God! This is for real!' I got a piece of paper and he named all the songs and said, 'Would you be available to fly out on Tuesday?' Here it is Sunday morning and I said, 'Oh yeah. Sure. I don't know if I can learn 19 songs by Tuesday...' He says, 'No, no, no, learn what you can. Come on out and you can work out here.' I said, 'Fine,' and sure enough they send me a ticket to fly me out on Tuesday. I ended up getting all the albums because back then there were no CDs! I found all the songs and started learning the material. They flew me to New York on Tuesday. At that time, a guy named Bernie Torme was playing with them, filling in until the new guy arrived, which, I guess, was me. I wasn't sure what kind of audition process I would be going through. Ozzy was playing Madison Square Gardens that night (Oh how I wished I would've done that gig . . .). A limo driver had picked me up at the airport and took me to the Helmsley Palace Hotel. I went to check in and there's no room under my name! Ooops. They gave me a one-way ticket and I had $150 in my pocket, and the room was $135. So....I had to pay cash for it. That left $15 in my pocket! There was no one around from the Osbourne entourage because they were all at Madison Square Gardens. I, basically, just went to my room and waited. Sure enough about midnight, I get a phone call from the road manager saying, 'Hey! Come on up and meet Ozzy.' I thought 'Wow, this is it. Cool.' I went up to the penthouse and there were press, media, radio, and rock stars everywhere! By the looks of it, it pretty much looked like there were about 20 or 30 long-haired musician/guitar player types in there, auditioning for the gig. I was thinking, 'Oh great, competition! A big auditioning process.'

I met Larry McNinny, the road manager, and I said, 'You know I had to pay for my own room!' and he handed me five crisp $100 bills and said 'This should keep ya happy.' I said, 'Yea, that'll work.' [Laughs]. I asked him, 'How many people here are auditioning?' and he replies, 'No, no, it's just you Brad.' I said, 'Really?' and he replies, 'Yeah. If you can't cut the gig, then we'll send you home and get somebody else.' (Well, no pressure THERE!). I went up to meet Ozzy and he tells me to go and get my guitar, so I went downstairs and grabbed my red strat from my room and came back up to the suite. He takes me up to the penthouse bedroom suite. He sat on the floor and I sat on the end of the bed. He asked, 'What song do you want to play?' I said, 'Well...'Flying High Again'' and so he sang it and I played my guitar, no amp at all. I came to the solo, played all the solo parts and he jumped up, gave me a big hug and said, 'Bradley, I love you. Pull me through!' He was having a hard time, you know, going through the tragedy of losing Randy Rhodes.

I hung out for four or five days on the road around the New York area, sitting in my room everyday, with a live Randy Rhodes tape that the sound man had recorded a few weeks before Randy's death, so I could check out all the segues in between songs. I was inside my room, oh geez....12 hours a day just playing my guitar and learning all the riffs. On the fifth day, Ozzy said, 'Let me know when you're ready 'cause Bernie wants to go home.' I said, 'I think I'm ready.'

I only had a chance to play six or seven songs at the soundcheck with the band, before my first gig in Binghampton, New York, sold out with 7,000 people. All the other songs, I'd never even played with the band before that first night. Then I did my first show. That was quite an experience. I screwed up on one song called 'Revelation, Mother Earth'. I went into the fast part too soon and Ozzy looked at me with that evil look like 'You screwed up!' I caught myself and got back into place and finished out the night, and did well! I started touring and did better and better every night. I got more comfortable with the material and learned how to swing my guitar neck back and forth and play at the same time (Rudy taught me). After about two weeks of touring and playing, we did a live broadcast from Memphis, Tennessee, the 'King Biscuit Flower Hour - Live Ozzy Osbourne' and that's when the whole country was able to hear me, the fans and my friends back home. That's when I started getting a little respect. I kicked butt that night. I played very well and after that, things went smooth. We were together for a little less than a year, went all over the country, all over the world actually, Japan and Europe and the States. We cut the 'Speak Of The Devil - Live' record in New York, at the Ritz Theatre, and that's when Night Ranger got a record deal and also when I decided to make the choice of going back with Night Ranger. 'Speak of the Devil' and Night Rangers 'Dawn Patrol' were released the same week in 1983.That was a good week!! We released 'Don't Tell Me You Love Me' and it became a big radio and MTV hit."

Considering all the work you've done, are you one of those people who thinks that your latest project is the best, or is there anything you've done in the past that's always going to be your favourite?

"Oh yeah, the 2 track demo I did in 1968 is my favourite!"

You know what I mean. Not even just musically. Best for memories surrounding it or whatever. Is there anything you've ever done (apart from the 2 track demo in 1968) that makes you cringe when you hear it you think 'I wish I could have done that differently'?

"There are certain songs that touch me more than others. Different records I've done with Night Ranger and solo wise. There are certain solos on certain songs that I wish I could have done a little BETTER, taken a little more time on and songs that didn't come across as Night Ranger sounding per se, like 'Secret of My Success' for instance."

Don't you like that song?

"That kinda took us in a different area than a lot of our true 'rockers'. It never really made me cringe, I mean they are what they are and we wouldn't have done them if they'd been that bad. A lot of songs, production wise I wished could have been different - bigger drum sound or more rhythm guitars, but that's all from a personal ear. That's why it's so great to do a solo record and have complete control. I've remixed Alligator so many times my ears are burning! Just to get things sounding good."

Do you think you'll be doing a new Night Ranger album in the near future?

"If the timing is right and we're all up to doing a new project, that would be great, but right now we're concentrating on a nice touring summer and if any record's gonna happen, it's gonna happen next winter."

In between you coming over here to play of course?

"Yes, right after I get home! I'll be writing songs on the return flight!"

That's okay then. That'll do me!!

Subscribe!

SPECIALLY PRICED DEBUT ISSUE STILL AVAILABLE - ONLY £3.00!

ISSUE 1: £4.00 (INCLUSIVE OF P&P)
ISSUE 2: £5.00 (INCLUSIVE OF P&P)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

PLEASE STATE ISSUE START NUMBER
6 ISSUES / 1 YEAR: UK - £24.00
EUROPE - £27.00
REST OF WORLD - £27 ($45) SURFACE MAIL
£35 ($56) AIRMAIL

PLEASE NOTE: THESE PRICES SUPERCEDE ALL PREVIOUS LISTED PRICES.

PLEASE SEND CHEQUES/POSTAL ORDERS MADE PAYABLE TO 'B. MEE' TO:

FIREWORKS MAGAZINE,
SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPT .
10 DUNNOCK CLOSE,
OFFERTON, STOCKPORT,
SK2 5XD, U.K.

Reach For The Stars!

HAVEN

★ by Nicky Baldrian

SHE HAS a thing for Kansas' Steve Walsh, she can sing like an angel, she's got the songs, she's got a killer band and she's worked with some of the hottest names in hard rock. Ladies and gentlemen, Fireworks introduces you to Pamme and her awesome band Haven whose debut album 'The Road' has just been released on Frontiers/Now And Then Records. Just don't call her Pamela, babe!

I got chatting with Pamme and fellow band members Michael Brody (bass, keys & guitar) and John Vanselow (Lead & rhythm guitars), and began by delving into the origins of the band.

When did you decide to form Haven?

PAMME: The Band was actually formed a few years back when we all simultaneously answered an ad. From the moment we all met there was just this immediate and intense chemistry that demanded to be pursued further. This was our first all original band and we think it's safe to say we're "lifers".

MICHAEL: I answered an ad, which is where I met John. Then Pamme answered an ad and joined. We played together for a few years and then kind of took a break for a couple of years. Then I wrote a track and called up Pamme and John and said "Wanna Rock?" That track turned out to be 'Can You Hear Us'. The project they were doing was called Haven. So I rejoined the Band. We work really well together.

JOHN: When Michael called, Pamme and I had been writing a lot of songs together and had recorded one or two songs with a producer. So we recorded 'Can You Hear Us' and after it was finished we were all excited. We decided to get together one afternoon and just let the tape recorder roll. We must have put down 20 song ideas. Pamme listened to the tape and immediately started writing lyrics. Most of the album came from that tape!

It was interesting to see Matt Sorum and Robin McAuley helping out. How did you hook up with them?

PAMME: Well, Matt and I grew up in Orange County. Even back then, he was a monster player! I remember him playing 'Burn' by Deep Purple for me, and just blowing me away! Afterwards, he sold me this huge tambourine that barely fit in my hand, and a Queen album for 10 bucks (Which reminds me...I think I still owe him the 10 bucks!). With Robin, I actually had a dream that we were driving around in my car listening to 'The Curtain' and 'Forgiveness' and I was asking if he wanted to do background vocals with me. Two days later, my sister Lisa and I saw him at a swap meet and he was just the COOLEST! The funny thing was, a couple years earlier (which I neglected to mention) I had stood in line after a MSG concert so he and Michael could sign their poster for me! Anyway, I guess the story must have intrigued him, because soon after, we were driving around the block of his neighbourhood listening to 'The Curtain' and 'Forgiveness'. I'll bet if he'd known how excited I was to be recreating my dream, he'd never have got in the car with me, because I drove like Mr Toad's Wild Ride at Disneyland and almost killed us at a 4-way stop!

I understand that you were in a band with Matt Sorum at one time - tell me about the band and did you record anything?

PAMME: Yes, that's true. I've yet to play in a band with a drummer that inspires me to the heights that Matt does. He remains my all time favourite drummer to play live with! We did record but unfortunately those tapes were destroyed in a bonfire!

Did the recording of your CD go as planned, it must have been hectic to fit in with everybody's busy schedules, how did you manage it?

PAMME: Matt and Robin are consummate professionals and are a blast to work with, so when their schedules permitted, they just came in and nailed their parts! After Robin had done his parts, Matt came in and laid down live drums to pre-recorded tracks and did the drums in 3 days. No rehearsal was necessary because Matt, not unlike Robin, is pretty much a one-take wonder. They'd just listen to the song and then say 'Let's do it!'. I recall telling Matt before hearing the songs that we had several ballads, is that cool? He responded with "Does 'November Rain' mean anything to you?" Matt is a complete and perpetual crack up - I just love that guy!

Do you enjoy collaborating with different musicians?

MICHAEL: I think it can expand your experience. You might go in a direction that you normally wouldn't. Sometimes that's good and other times it's not. I'll always try to have an open mind and give it a try. You know when it feels right.

PAMME: Absolutely! The energy and feedback that comes from working with other musicians can be extremely inspiring.

Tell me about the songs on the debut?

PAMME: For this project, John and Michael would get together to bounce ideas back and forth. After they'd get the scratch tracks, they would then pass the ideas on to me on Adat. I would wait to have the mic on and the tape rolling before even hearing most of the parts for the first time, preferring to just wing it and improvise to whatever was on the tape. Then, we'd all get together and collectively choose the songs that we felt captured the most magic. Once we decided on which songs we would take to the next level. John and Michael laid down all the music tracks. Once again, I'd get the songs on Adat, and recorded my parts in a studio I have at the house, complete with all the necessary atmospheric 'creature' comforts of home. And by creature, I do mean CREATURE! You see, I have a lot of animals and have always found them to be very grounding, not to mention quite the enthusiastic audience! While writing this record, I endured some of the most immeasurable losses in my life, with little or no recovery time in between. I discovered first hand just how viciously relentless grief can be. So much so, that at times, it can just threaten to consume you! Having had the music to channel the waves of emotions into was an amazingly cathartic experience, and my hope is, that others who are going through significant heartaches of their own, will also find subjective and substantial comfort in the songs.

JOHN: I guess you could say our songs have more of a universal message to them. We put positive and uplifting messages in our lyrics and hope that people that are going through some difficult times in their lives can find some hope and comfort from our songs.

Who are your inspirations musically and spiritually?

PAMME: Steve Walsh of Kansas, Ann Wilson of Heart and Steve Perry from Journey! They are clearly phenomenal singers and I have yet to hear anyone grab hold of my heart and demand my attention at that magnitude. I also learned a lot from David Coverdale and Glenn Hughes of Deep Purple, Tommy Shaw of Styx, Lou Gramm of Foreigner and Joe Lynn Turner. Spiritually, no question - Kansas! This band inspires me with authentic emotions and made me aware of just how powerful and healing music can be. Their songs 'The Wall' and 'Hope Once Again' bring tears to my eyes and in an instant puts me back in spirit.

MICHAEL: I started playing music because of Paul McCartney. Some of the bands that inspired me were The Beatles, Rush (Geddy Lee), Kiss, Jeff Buckley and Sting. Spiritually.....now that's a good question. There are so many teachers around us. All we have to do is listen and observe.

JOHN: Musically I was inspired by UFO (Michael Schenker), Rush, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Robin Trower, The Beatles, Y&T and Classical Music. Spiritually I ry to find inspiration in everything. It's there, we just forget it!

When you start piecing your songs together, do you go with the natural flow of what's comes out or do you start looking for some form of inspiration?

PAMME: I believe that within certain instrumentals the story already exists and beckons to be told. The most compelling lyrics are those that find their home amidst music that not only compliments the tale but delivers the message just as successfully.

MICHAEL: I go with the flow. Inspiration comes when it does. It can be in the shower or in the car. Usually when I'm in that state of 'being' and not trying to force anything, ideas come flowing quite easily.

JOHN: I think that for all of us inspiration comes when we are not looking for it. Our best songs were written that way and just seemed to come together naturally. Of course there are those songs that you just can't seem to finish and with those you have to look for some inspiration.

Pamme, how long have you been singing for and what made you became a singer?

PAMME: I can't remember not singing. It all started with a radio cassette player I got for Junior High School graduation. I spent that whole summer forcing my reluctant friends to monitor my progress as I sang them my renditions of that summer's Top 40! And what a lonely summer that became! We are all born with innate abilities and I really do feel blessed to have discovered my purpose early on.

Is there anyone in the business you would like to write and/or perform with?

PAMME: Hmm, let me see....Steve Walsh, Steve Walsh, Steve Walsh! Starting to see a pattern here aren't you? Good thing for Steve they passed that stalking law!

Have you had any unsavoury experiences being a good-looking woman in the music industry, or has this worked to your advantage?

PAMME: I've had a few, shall we say, narrow escapes, ending with 'How 'bout no, Scott!' Yeah, sure.....THEN you'll hear my songs and get back to me, right? I love that story! By the way, I just love Austin Powers. Mike Myers is a genius.

The original release didn't have a title. Now it's called 'The Road'. Why?

JOHN: We never could decide on a title so when we released it ourselves we just called the album 'Haven'. When the artwork was almost done we were all looking at the cover and we thought it needed something under the logo. So we decided to name the album. We all thought about it for a few minutes and we all agreed on 'The Road'.

PAMME: It just seemed apropos, as we all travel down our subjective roads to ultimately the same destination.

MICHAEL: 'The Road' felt right. We've all been through some unfortunate situations the last few years and the Road we've all travelled has been rough. But we've all grown and learned from these experiences.

What's in store for the future?

PAMME: Hopefully that our music will create a ripple effect much like the bands that have and continue to inspire us.

JOHN: The immediate future has us finishing up some publishing contracts, some more interviews and getting our website up and going. After that we will start the process for recording the next album. Hopefully the debut will be received well and from there who knows...

MICHAEL: Many wonderful things!

Is the band gonna stay a 3 piece with guests, or expand?

JOHN: For now we are going to stay a 3 piece. We will probably have Matt Sorum play on some tracks along with Steve Klong who is also an exceptional drummer. Robin has already agreed to sing on a few songs again and we might have Johnny Lima sing a little. Lars Eric Mattsson has agreed to play on at least one track, which will be really cool. He's an awesome player!

MICHAEL: The 3 of us make a unique combination of elements. It works really well for us. If we end up doing some shows overseas then we might expand at that time.

Is there anything you would like to say to say to your fans out there?

MICHAEL: Thanks for hearing our music and being touched in someway. It's really nice to hear that people like what you are trying to convey.

JOHN: Thanks to all of you have contacted us and told us how much you like our music. We really appreciate it when someone takes the time to write and we always try to answer every one of you.

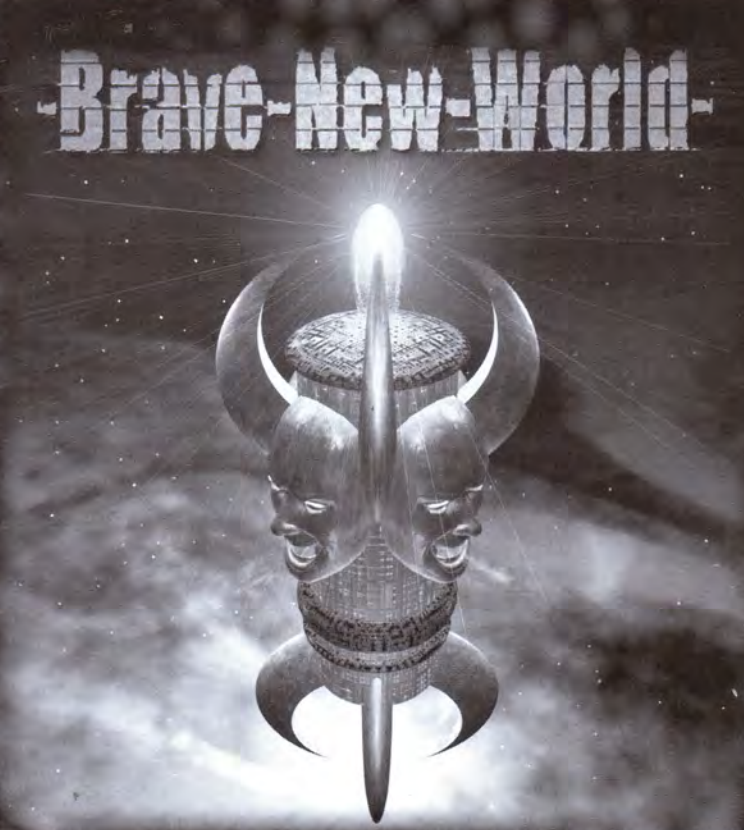
PAMME: Thank you for allowing us into your heads and hopefully your hearts. On with the adventure.....

UNDERGROUND SENSATIONS

• HOT NEW TALENT •

THERE ARE so many excellent bands out there who we tend to overlook due to lack of a decent production sound or coverage in magazines, especially here in Britian where countless bands send me demos that are good in song and musical quality but lack the afore-mentiond sound polish, which is a damn shame really as this country really needs more melodic rock and AOR bands. And when some bands do come along that kick ass no one takes any notice.

-Brave-New-World-



Look no further than recent recordings from UK melodic bands such as the excellent Tikaboo Peak, the all girl band Pure Passion, Crazy Nation, Deadline, Leon Evans and Paul Davies. All these bands are great but on the whole would benefit from a decent sound if they are to raise any eyebrowes with Mr A&R man. Instead were having to look further afield to find hot new bands who have what it takes to get major label attention. However, alongside the likes of Ten, Pride, Heartland and the like, I did discover one English band who will indeed be flying the flag for melodic hard rock in Britain. They are Bognor Regis based rockers **BRAVE NEW WORLD** whose new CD 'Monsters' was recorded in Denmark on an expensive budget.

"Brave New World is the continuation of what used to be Passion Street," explains lead singer Rick Cartey on the phone from his home in Bognor. "We've been together now as Brave New World since the summer of 1998."

Passion Street released their successful debut 'Million Miles Away' in 1994 on the Mega Rock label closely followed by a tape only EP called 'Transition'. 'Million Miles Away' is a pure AOR gem of a record, but times have moved on and the bands style has progressed in a heavier direction. "Comparing our sound now to that from the Passion Street CD and you'll hear that we sound like a different band," continues Rick. "This really feels like a new begining for us. I hope to record another Passion Street album in the future, in keeping with the style of the 'Million Miles Away' CD but right now we are putting all our efforts into the new 'Monsters' album."

Rick started singing back in 1985 with a local band. "I had been taught Piano/Keyboards as a child. I've never taken singing lessons but have been fortunate enough to get advice from some great singers like Hugo. I'm influenced by Rick Springfield, Richard Marx, Steve Perry, Steve Walsh, Mike Reno, Dan Reed and John Waite to name but a few." Talking of Hugo, Rick and the band became Hugo's live band for his appearance at the Gods festival back in 1996/97. "Mark Ashton at Now & Then asked us if we'd like to do it. It was all at short notice so I wouldn't say we played too great, but it didn't seem to matter cause we all had a lot of fun with it. I ended up playing keyboards. Hugo's a funny guy and I still keep in touch with him." The band have also supported Peter Frampton and Enuff 'Z Nuff in the past. "It was great opening for Peter Frampton cause I've been into his music since I was a teenager. Plus we got to play the Empire Theatre in London which is a great venue. To play with Enuff 'Z Nuff was a thrill too cause I've always been a big fan of theirs."

And it seems as if the stars have taken a liken to Brave New World's music, as in August they will support Ted Poley on his string of UK dates with his new band Melodica. "It's great to have the chance to play with musicians who you admire," says Rick with pride. Poley has already agreed to have the band open up for him in the US later on this year, so could Brave New World be the British band to break out of the club circuit? One certainly hopes so as their new album is full of (excuse the pun) monster songs, coupled with a monster production sound which brings me to ask Rick about his involvement with yet another famed musician, Torben Schmidt of Skagarack fame. "Torben was involved in the mastering of the 'Monsters' album. When we discovered he was an old friend of our producer Kim Baekgaard we asked him to contact Torben, as we are big fans of the Swedish band 'Freak Kitchen' who he has recorded and manages. And so Torben agreed to work with us. He's a very nice guy and has been a real help. Since the Passion Street album came out in 1994 the band have gone through some line up changes, musical changes and various record company fiascos. "Plus a world full of personal shit, next thing you know you're in the new Millennium," continues Rick. "The 'Monsters' album is a collection of some of our favourite songs that we've written over the past few years. We recorded it at a great studio in the middle of nowhere in a town called Sabro in Denmark. Because we financed this ourselves it was recorded over a period of about 18 month's, but we spent about 2 month's in the studio."

Joining Rick on the new album is Norwegian drummer Tommy who played with the band Valhalla who released one album. Tommy started playing drums when he was 9 years old and is now 27. Influenced by Vinnie Colaiuta, Ian Paice, Simon Phillips, Mike Portnoy, Neil Peart and many more, Tommy uses an upgraded 6 piece Pearl MLX drumkit, Sabian/Zildjian cymbals, Pearl eliminator double bassdrum pedal and an African handmade djembe. He joined Brave New World when he got the call from Rick. "Valhalla broke up in 1997 after one album ['Rush'] and some touring in Norway. The reason why we split up was because of some musical disagreements. Some members of the band wanted to play a softer type of music than the rest, and that led us to split up. Then I got a call from Rick who wanted me to play drums on the 'Brave New World' album. Rick had heard the Valhalla album and he has also seen me play live once, so he knew what type of drummer I was. And so I joined the guys in Denmark and recorded the drums, and I think they were pretty satisfied with the drumming. So they asked me to be a member of the band, and here I am."

Bassist Pat Heath has been a longtime member of the band. He has currently recorded a track for the Jason Becker tribute CD. 'I originally played bass for a couple of years," says Pat. "I started when I was about 13 I think, but moved on to guitar at fifteen. I am 23 now so I must have been playing guitars for about 8 years or so. I have a range of gear that I like. I use different instruments for different things. I have a couple of Jackson guitars. I have a Randy Rhoads model which is purely for the studio. It has a really thick heavy sound for riffing. I also have a Jackson Dinky which is awesome, the guys at AMIC [UK distributor for Jackson] have really looked after me this year. Those two are my workhorse instruments, but my fave is an Ibanez RG 'paint' custom shop guitar which stays at home. Too expensive to lug around venues! Amp wise I use a Crate TDP preamp. I cost me £250 and I bought it when I was 17 because it was white and I wanted my rack to look cool. But it turns out it was one of the best things I ever bought! The whole album was recorded with that through a mesa boogie poweramp. For the shows in August I have a full stereo rig laid on by Laney. It is a VH100 valve head and 2 cabs that have been modified and re-valved for John 5 from Marilyn Manson as it is his UK rig!"

Pat's musical influences range from Maiden, Megadeth and Metallica. "I was really into the bay area Thrash scene, really obscure bands like Forbidden and Heathen. I was really into Pantera, 'Cowboys..' particularly, but later on I got into players like Alan Holdsworth, John Petrucci and Freidman/Becker. You can hear those last two in my playing on the version of 'Go Off' which I did with Chris Green [Pride] for the 'Warmth in the Wilderness' Becker Tribute album. For chilling I love Classical and Baroque, but my CD's do range from Allegri to Zakk Wylde." Keyboradist Chris has been playing for over 25 years now and is influenced by many bands. "Too many to mention," he adds. "My influences cover the whole rock spectrum, not just any one individual style."

Watch out for Brave New World on tour with Melodica in August. The album will be released at the same time. For more info Email: **RickCartey@onetel.net.uk** or **check out their website at: www.bravenewworldmusic.com**

You know, there's this band over in the US (Sante Fe to be exact) who kept pestering me to hurry up and get the review of their album done. Little did they realise that the reason for my delay was because there was something wonderfully unique happening about these guys that gave me writers block, and it's very rare that you get a band whose demos create such a buzz that it's hard to put into words. So it's a big melodic 'Hello' to **ANGEL EDGE** whose excellent demo CD 'Revisited' has spent many hours whizzing around on heavy rotation on this journos death deck over the last couple of months, and I still ain't bored yet. In fact I'm hooked! Their style as you guessed is melodic hard rock, quite similar actually to Journey, Dokken, Defcon, Danny Danzi etc Kenny Romero is one hell of a singer, his pitch is in the vein of Steve Perry with hints of Don Dokken and Tony Harnell. Take the opening track 'All A Game' for instance, this is where those Schon/Lynch style guitar hooks flow, whilst 'Incessant Love' proves to be one of my favourite cuts and could have come straight from 'Frontiers'.

The speedy 'Headin' To Sound City' is up next and this is where the fun starts to heat up. Yeah, I love this instrumental cut which showcases Rumaldo Oritz's all guns blazing guitar wizardry. The sound of this demo album isn't too bad, even though at times it can sound like some of those early eighties vinyl records such as Paul Sabu etc. 'Sound City' leads us on into the catchy as hell 'License To Thrill', a good hard rock song whilst 'Broken Hearts And Shattered Dreams' is a ballad in the Perry 'Frontiers' and is fantastic - I love it when Kenny hits certain vocal levels thats makes him a deadringer for Perry amongst others.

'Will You Be There' is up next and again this is a great song that makes me think of early Dokken and Danny Danzi. Then comes what I consider to be another of the band's best songs, 'Realm Of Darkness'. This number is a guitar heavy number a la Ronnie Le Tekro and George Lynch coupled with very melodic harmony vocals similar to Tony Harnell from TNT crossed with Don Dokken. The final song is 'All That's Left Is Goodbye' and it is another superb melodic ballad with a excellent guitar tone and crosses Dokken with Journey.

Seriously, despite the sometimes poor sound quality, Angel Edge are simply fantastic and deserve a record deal. If you like guitar driven US melodic hard rock of the 80's formula then check them out and get your air guitar rocking, bang yer head and crank up that volume. Watch out for this band folks, they guys are happening and they are fastly riding high in the mp3.com metal charts. Watch them go!!

www.mp3.com/angeledge or Email : **rrrortiz@juno.com**

• NICKY BALDRIAN

BLASTS FROM THE PAST!

KISS
'Destroyer'
Casablanca Records (1976)

KISS, THE ULTIMATE Glam Rock Kings with their larger than life personas and alter egos of Cats, Star Children, Demons and Spacemen would prove to be one of the hard rock phenomenas of the 70s and this album would prove to be one of the best they ever made.

Coming hot on the heels of "Alive", a lot was expected of this release and let me tell you now that it didn't disappoint anyone. It was everything that Kiss were all about and then some. It was loud, proud and in your face and every aspect of it just screamed 'CLASSIC'! From the first song to the very last, this ladies and gentleman was what rock 'n' roll was all about.

With the album artwork depicting four cartoon like characters dancing amid the ruins of a city this set the tone for a rock 'n' roller-coaster ride of larger than life proportions. This was the devil's music and make no mistake and the kids loved it much in the same way that the likes of Marilyn Manson is loved in this day and age. Reviled by many and loved by more Kiss couldn't care less to what people thought of them and this album was a huge two fingered salute to all those people that said the band couldn't play or write songs and relied entirely on their stageshow to get them where they were.

The album opened with what is arguably the best Kiss song ever written, namely "Detroit Rock City". A song that was simplistic in structure yet when it was played live there wasn't a song that could touch it for enthusiasm or energy and if you to felt uptight on a saturday night then this song was the perfect remedy, it was one of Paul Stanley's finest moments for sure. Another song that would become a regular fixture at a Kiss concert was "God Of Thunder". Simmons' demon persona certainly came to life on this one and with a bass line that smacked you straight in the rib cage "subtlety" was not this song's middle name. The one thing I have noticed while I was reviewing this was how much the likes of "Great Expectations" and "Do You Love Me" owe a huge debt of gratitude to Alice Cooper, surely "Welcome To My Nightmare" was high on the Kiss playlist at the time of this albums recording.

'Destroyer' also contained "Beth" one of the biggest selling singles that Kiss ever released and just to think that it was originally a B side until it started picking up more airplay than the A-side ("Detroit Rock City"). It's a testament to the songs on this album that several of them are still in the live set and still sound great to this day.

With the band deciding to call it a day in 2001/2 and if they do decide to play the U.K for one last time then go along as it will be one of the best nights of your life. You wanted the best and you certainly got it with this platinum platter.

• ***ROB EVANS***

MOTLEY CRUE
'Too Fast For Love'
Leathur Records (1981)

WHEN I FIRST discovered Motley Crue via Sounds Magazine I was just getting into the American side of hard rock. *I had just seen Kiss in make-up for the first time and was heavily into Angel, Starz and Legs Diamond amongst others, when in 1981 along came this lot with this their debut album. When I read Geoff Barton's review in Sounds magazine I was hooked and when I saw their image, well, nothing was going to stop me getting hold of this baby. Looking like the bastard off-springs of both The Sweet and Kiss, this lot were stackheeled strutters of the highest order and as for Vince Neil's hair?! Let's just say that the Ozone layer took one helluva battering that day!*

Originally formed from the ashes of various Los Angeles bands The Crue set about spearheading the L.A Glam/Hair Band scene of the 80s of which a lot of bands followed but none would match this lot for style, panache and O.T.T antics. Having hooked up with their Manager Allan Coffman they proceeded this album with a single "Toast Of The Town/Stick To Your Guns" glorious Glam anthems that set the scene for the debut album. Recorded on a shoe-string budget "Too Fast For Love" had an almost punkish feel to it and after one listen you knew that this was something special and that bigger things were destined.

Nikki Sixx once described it as 'A Really Dirty Sounding Record' and I couldn't have put it better myself. Led by the gutter like guitar sound of Mick Mars, these songs would soon become personal favourites of mine and still are to this day. If I had to pick highlights then they would have to be "Live Wire", "Public Enemy No.1", "Take Me To The Top" and "On With The Show", each one packed with snot nosed attitude. Not long after this was released they were signed to Elektra Records who wanted to re-release this album as part of the deal. The only problem? They wanted to give it a complete make-over courtesy of famed Queen producer Roy Thomas Baker who proceeded to rob it of energy, attitude and just about everything else that made this record what it was. In truth, it was polished up for radio and castrated in the process. With new intro's, dropped songs and added vocal parts, this version of the record barely resembled the original superior version and to this day it has never been released onto CD.

• ***ROB EVANS***

DONNIE IRIS & THE CRUISERS
'King Cool'
MCA Records (1981)

THIS WAS Donnie's second release as solo artist and my first introduction to him way back in 1981. *I first got to know about him after hearing "Love Is Like A Rock" on Radio One's The Dave Lee Travis show. With my interest suitably piqued I went and bought the album and was bowled over by it's level of brilliant hook infused songwriting. Having been around in the 70s Donnie was no stranger to success having been a part of the Jaggerz who had a number one with "The Rapper" and he was also a member of Wild Cherry who had a hit with "Play That Funky Music"*

This album though was a million miles away from those records and was a glorious amalgamation of 50s Doo-Wop and 80s AOR. Donnie, with his Buddy Holly image, was the king of geek chic and The Cruisers were the perfect accessory for any rock 'n' roller. Now in the days of vinyl this was definately a side two album and that was to take nothing from side one, it's just that all five songs on side two are of such a high standard that the rest didn't stand a chance. Anyone who knows me will know what a sucker I am for vocal harmonies and let me tell you now that they don't come any better than this album. In fact they would even rival the mighty Venice as one listen to any of these songs will confirm.

Of the songs on side one "Pretender", "Love Is Like A Rock" and "That's The Way Love Ought To Be" all take top honours, but flip this sucker over and that's where the real fun starts. The Doo, Wop harmonies of "My Girl" give way to "Broken Promises" with it's vocal harmonisation of huge proportions. Just listen to that vocal interplay and be amazed and no, your ears don't deceive you, it really is that good. The title song "King Cool" was a tale of love lost to an electric guitar, 'He's King Cool, He's No Fool', but listen to those lyrics closely and it's obvious that he is. The final two songs "Color Me Blue" and "The Last To Know" are just the icing and the cherry on an already perfect cake. Donnie went on to make many more albums and only "No Muss, No Fuss" ever came close to this masterpeice. It did get re-issued onto CD in the mid nineties and is quite easily available, so no excuse for not searching it out.

• ***ROB EVANS***

A MAGICKAL INTERLUDE...by Paul Jerome Smith

ALCHEMY VII

HAVING VOLUNTEERED to review the two CDs by Gina Citoli's bands, our esteemed editor asked whether I would like to do a short interview with Gina to find out a little more of the background to the band and of the plans for the future. I began by asking Gina about the origins of the band.

"The band was originally conceived 7 years ago. We started out as Nighttspell. We worked on a CD that turned out to be withheld from us in a power play. It almost destroyed the band but we kept going, doing cover material in clubs. At this time the group consisted of myself, Gina Citoli, Steve Lundberg, our guitar player, Sue Birch our bass player plus a different drummer for the first year. He turned out to be on a different path from the rest of us and after a run of disastrous gigs he left. At this point after the bad record deal and the drummer leaving I really thought that was it for the band. But Sue, Steve and I decided to keep trying. A friend told us about a drummer that would be perfect for us. Carl Wergyn showed up at my house, played one song with us and we all knew it was right. That was 6 years ago this August. We changed our name to Storm Runner and continued playing clubs and began to incorporate our original material. It went alright but no one understood what we were about and then we got on a roll of running into snow storms, ice storms, wind storms and.....you name it!

Well Carl and I decided that we just could not do bars any more and it was just too hard to keep going. So we parted ways after about a year. I thought that was it again as I had no idea where to take it from there. Then I ran into the man that had produced a demo and single for me. I told him what happened with our CD and he was in a position to help us get another CD done in a way I could afford, as my husband and I were building a house and it really was a stretch to finance a CD. So I called Sue, Steve and Carl and they were all right there. This was when we became Gina's Alchemy. So we wrote and recorded 'The Magick' the winter of 97/98 and recorded it in the spring. Well now we had the CD but had no idea what to do with it."

Were you playing live at this time?

"Playing live was a continuing problem, as we needed more vocals and keyboards to do our music justice. First we found Sarah Montgomery who filled out our backing vocals nicely, then we tried putting Sue on keyboards, as she plays several instruments, and a friend of ours filled in on bass to see if this would get us out to some live events. We did a few and at one of these a keyboard player that I had been talking to on the Net who had not had the time to get involved a year before came to see us and wanted to join. We auditioned him and our friend the bass player said he is the keyboard player for us. So we put Sue back on bass and finally were able to play live."

I am a little confused as to which keyboard player you had been talking to on the Net. James Walsh who is credited on The Magick Vol 1, or Marshall Davis who is shown on Alchemy VII?

"James Walsh is a producer I have worked with. He is also a keyboard player and he was on the first CD because we did not have a permanent keyboard player. Marshall is the one I had been communicating with via e-mail and is our present keyboardist."

What sort of audience did you have at your gigs?

"We tried The New Age market and picked up some following but we were too rock-oriented. So again we were stumped as to the direction to go. Well one night I was talking to my sister, who is also a singer and writer; she had been having some luck with the Internet. She said you really have to find your market. Well I was stumped as I did not know where we fitted in. Well, somehow the word 'pagan' popped into my head and I typed it into the web search and I found a site called Pagan Rock. One of the descriptions said that the New Age is water and air and Pagan rock was Fire and Earth with the guitars and drums and I thought that sounds like us. We have a 'Magickal', Environmental and conscious-raising message but we are a rock band. So I contacted Scott Martin who has the site and he did a review on us and tapped us into the whole Pagan market. This is when we became Alchemy VII."

Why Alchemy VII?

"We first used Gina's Alchemy because we figured there would not be another one. We wanted to use Alchemy as it means to take something common and turn it into something special. As we moved along it felt too egotistical to have my name like it was mine, as it belongs to us all. We used 7 as it is a very mystical number and eventually there became 7 of us in the band."

The word "pagan" seems to conjure up visions of heathens and witches. Are you trying to appeal to these categories of listener?!!!

"I think the word pagan, is highly misunderstood. It is about earth-based beliefs, the neo Pagan seems to be filling a need for an alternative in our world that honours the earth and a more global consciousness. It is very much about love and light, though occasionally you run into the dark side but that is true of anything. Our markets seem to be progressive, Pagan, environmental and anyone that is looking for some alternative to the mundane.

Having made such a blisteringly good album in The Magick Vol 1, AVII demonstrates a complete mixture of different styles. "Natural Order Of Things" for instance is very lounge-core and cabaret style whilst "In Your Name" is really jazz-funk. Did you intend to record a second album that was so diverse?

"Actually these were just songs we had written that we felt were good songs but yes very diverse. We were going to add more but decided to put what we have on a short CD and then start toward "The Magick Vol 2" which will be another concept CD."

AVII is also a very short album. Did the money run out?

"We just felt we needed some new tunes out there so we put it together and we sell it for $10 rather than the $15 for standard CD's. Personally I wanted to start working on where The Magick left off. The songs on AVII don't fit into the concept exactly. A lot of it was decided on intuition, going with the gut feeling....."

What is the band concentrating upon at present?

"We have a piece that will be in an educational environmental film and we have some more shows this fall that will be a concept idea we have. We are working on our light show and live show. We are shooting for a major tour in the spring and hope to include Europe in it. We are also looking for a promoter/manager that understands o concept and vision. This winter we plan on writing our next CD and when it is ready, recording it. Also have some material that Sue and Steve and I did when we were Nighttspell that we just recently had returned to us. There are some good songs on there and I think we will mix them and put out on the internet."

What motivates the band?

"We have all been in the music biz a long time and are in our 30's and 40's. We should probably have our heads examined and quit a long time ago. But we really believe in what we are doing. We have found our listeners range from people in their 20's to families where mom, dad and the kids listen as well as baby boomers and some who are even older! We call ourselves Earth Rock. So we just keep rocking for our planet and for a more caring and magickal world."

Cheers, Gina. I for one look forward to hearing "The Magick Vol. 2" when it is available. Meanwhile, the title track from Vol.1 appears on this issue's sampler CD.

And you can check out further songs at: **www.mp3.com/AlchemyVII** and look up the band's website at:
http://Alchemyvii.Listen.to

NOW & THEN PRODUCTIONS

PROUDLY PRESENTS

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 3RD

DARE · STAN BUSH
EMERALD RAIN
JORN · ADRIANGALE

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 4TH

HAREM SCAREM°
BOURGEOIS PIGS*
MITCH MALLOY
SKIN TAG
BAILEY'S COMET

°FIRST EVER UK SHOW *FEATURING JAKE E. LEE
FURTHER ACTS TO BE CONFIRMED

MAXIMES·WIGAN
61-69 STANDISH GATE, WIGAN, LANCS
TEL: 01942 239717

TICKETS: £22.50 PER DAY
SPECIAL 2 DAY TICKET: £40.00

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM:
NOW & THEN PRODUCTIONS, UNIT 23, EMPRESS MILL, INCE, WIGAN, LANCS, WN2 2BG.
CHEQUES/PO'S/EUROCHEQUES/IMO'S PAYABLE TO MARK ASHTON IN UK POUNDS STERLING ONLY.
BY CREDIT CARD FROM THE FOLLOWING OUTLETS (SUBJECT TO BOOKING FEE):
DESTINY RECORDS TEL: 01489 603549 FAX: 01489 603550
LOUD 1 TEL: 01782 522370 WEBSITE: www.loud1.co.uk EMAIL: Loud@btinternet.com
GROOVE MACHINE TEL:016977 46102 FAX: 016977 46775
WEBSITE: www.thegroovemachine1.co.uk EMAIL: igrooveman@aol.com
TICKETLINE TEL: 0161 832 1100 FAX: 0161 832 1112 WEBSITE: www.ticketline.co.uk

FOR FURTHER INFO. CHECK OUT THE NOW & THEN WEBSITE:
http://www.nowandthen.co.uk

CHART

KIERAN DARGAN

1. PRIDE - Far from the Edge
2. MELODICA - Lovemetal
3. DARE - Belief
4. SOUL DOCTOR - Soul Doctor
5. TNA - Finger on the Trigger

PHIL ASHCROFT

1. DAVID GLEN EISLEY - The Lost Tapes
2. PARADISE - Light The Fire
3. WESTWORLD - Live..In The Flesh
4. HURRICANE - Liquifury
5. RADIOACTIVE - Ceremony Of Innocence

EVA MONTES

1. TERRY BROCK - Back to Eden
2. STAN BUSH - Language of the Heart
3. URBAN TALE - Urban Tale
4. SOUL DOCTOR - Soul Doctor
5. HUSH - II

DAVE COCKETT

1. BALANCE OF POWER - Perfect Balance
2. URBAN TALE - Urban Tale
3. POVERTY'S NO CRIME - One In A Million
4. ADAGIO - Sanctus Ignis
5. SOUL DOCTOR - Soul Doctor

WOLF GANT

1. TERRY BROCK - Back to Eden
2. JORN - Sunset Station
3. HURRICANE - Liquifury
4. VON GROOVE - Seventh Day
5. VAUGHN - Fearless

SUE ASHCROFT

1. TYGERS OF PAN TANG - Mystical
2. CARL DIXON - Into The Future
3. RADIO SILENCE - Sirens
4. TERRY BROCK - Back To Eden
5. URBAN TALE - Urban Tale

PAUL JEROME SMITH

1. LAST TRIBE - The Ritual
2. TERRY BROCK - Back To Eden
3. MOSTLY AUTUMN - The Last Bright Light
4. GINA'S ALCHEMY - The Magick Vol. 1
5. STEVIE NICKS - Trouble In Shangri La

PETRA ROTTMANN

1. BALANCE OF POWER - Perfect Balance
2. TERRY BROCK - Back to Eden
3. RICK SPRINGFIELD - Live
4. VON GROOVE - Seventh Day
5. HALFORD - Live Insurrection

DEZ BAILEY

1. JEAN BEAUVOIR - Bare To The Bones
2. JASON BECKER TRIBUTE - Warmth...
3. VARIOUS - MTM Music Volume 6
4. CARL DIXON - Into The Future
5. RADIOACTIVE - Ceremony Of Innocence

NICKY BALDRIAN

1. JASON BECKER - Warmth In The Wilderness
2. URBAN TALE - Urban Tale
3. TONY FRANKLIN - Brave New Tomorrow
4. DEVIN TOWNSEND - NDC Karma
5. IRON HORSE - Iron Horse

ROB EVANS

1. AEROSMITH - Just Push Play
2. BRAVE NEW WORLD - Monsters
3. TERRY BROCK - Back to Eden
4. BJORK - Vespertine
5. ARTHURS MUSEUM - Gallery Closed

PAUL DIAMOND

1. AEROSMITH - Just Push Play
2. SOUL DOCTOR - Soul Doctor
3. DEMON DRIVE - Rock And Roll Star (Advance)
4. VON GROOVE - The Seventh Day
5. KISS - Psycho Circus

SEBASTIAN KOZAK

1. AEROSMITH - Just Push Play
2. DEMON DRIVE - Rock And Roll Star (Advance)
3. SHAKRA - Power Ride
4. REX - Where Do We Go From Here?
5. SOUL DOCTOR - Soul Doctor

COMPETITION

WIN A COPY OF SOUL DOCTOR!

The New Hard Rock Sensation featuring Tommy Heart and Joerg Deisinger!

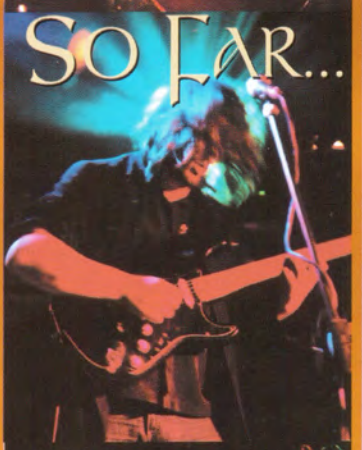
To enter simply send your name and address on a postcard to:

FIREWORKS MAGAZINE
SOUL DOCTOR COMPETITION
10 DUNNOCK CLOSE
OFFERTON, STOCKPORT,
SK2 5XD, U.K.

Closing Date: October 30th 2001

Mostly Autumn

The Story So Far...



"Hailed as the new saviours of British Progressive Rock... there is something about this unmistakably English sound they've clearly made their own."
CLASSIC ROCK MAGAZINE

If you only listen to one new band this year... make it this one.

Hailed as the leading exponents of the new wave of British classic rock and voted Best New Band by the Classic Rock Society, this superb two hour DVD showcases the very best of Mostly Autumn live in concert.

This edition is limited to 1000 copies and comes in a special presentation edition which includes a unique 24 page booklet in a special slipcase.

- Your own personally numbered copy of the limited edition DVD signed by all members of the band.
- Your name in the roll of honour printed in the booklet.
- Delivery to your door one month in advance of the main release. (Scheduled for September 18th)
- Priority notice of a very special launch event

Voted Best New Band by the Classic Rock Society with Heather Findlay voted Best Female Vocalist

CALL 01789 294472 OR VISIT classic-rocklegends.com NOW!

I would like a Subscription at £19.95 ❑ Fireworks 8/01

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Classic Rock Legends Ltd for £.....

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

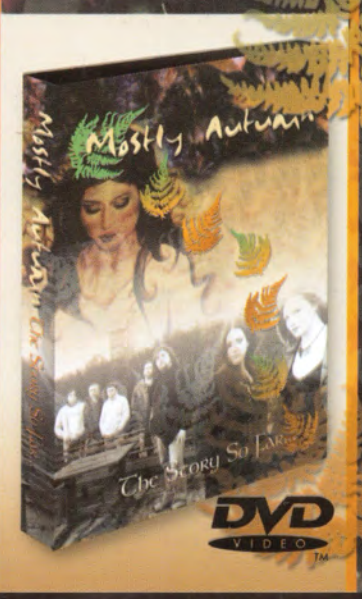
Post code: ..... Telephone: ..... Email: .....

Please debit my card (Please tick appropriate box) Visa ❑ Switch ❑ American Express ❑ Mastercard ❑

Card no ..... Expiry date ..... Issue no .....

CLASSIC ROCK LEGENDS

You can pay for your subscription by cheque (made payable to Classic Rock Legends Ltd), postal order or credit card. There are five ways to buy your subscription : 1) Simply dial 44 (0)1789 294472 and place your order using your credit card, 2) e-mail: chris.classicrock@virgin.net (please put 'ORDER' in the subject field), 3) fax your order form with your credit card details to 44 (0)1789 415210, 4) visit www.classic-rocklegends.com and order electronically, or 5) fill in this form and send it to Classic Rock Legends, 11 Central Chambers, Cooks Alley, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 6QN, UK.



NEW ALBUM OUT AUG 27TH

DEMON

DEMON - Spaced Out Monkey (RHCD43)

ALSO AVAILABLE
REMASTERED WITH
BONUS TRACKS

AVAILABLE NOW !

FIVE FIFTEEN

Death Of A Clown (RHCD49)

RECORD HEAVEN MUSIC
CLASSIC ROCK LABEL
www.rhcd.net

CARGO RECORDS